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# Husserl and Derrida—the Origins of History

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## Summary:

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysical priority of the present simultaneously validates presence as the absolute form of meaning. In order to succeed, deconstruction is bound to offer the most robust defence of transcendental phenomenology's systematic articulation of the very constitution of experience in its absolute and irrecusably present form.

Edmund Husserl's late philosophy of history accounts for the contradiction of *atemporal* truth—how it is created in time, and how it is possible for the historical investigation of this truth to determine its meaning with absolute certainty. Through the necessity of an ideal and phenomenologically reduced history—not only for the work of historical investigation in its own right, but as a constituent of the *meaning* of any truth—Derrida explains why Husserl devotes so much effort to explicating the structure and process of the formation of ideal objects in the course of what is ostensibly an explanation of the origination of the geometrical science itself out of subjective experience. The purpose of this is only ever implied in Husserl's own work "The Origin of Geometry", and the implications are subtle.

The purpose of this thesis is to detail how the structures of Husserl's system serve the end clearly elucidated by Derrida. It first explains how objective truth is constituted and an ideal history made possible through Husserl's examination of their appearance in the living present, and following this it examines the problems raised by Derrida's deconstruction itself.

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted,  
either in the same or different form to this  
or any other University for a degree (This excludes  
the submission of this thesis prior to revisions for the  
purpose of this same degree).

**Signature:**

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## Abbreviations

### Works by Jacques Derrida

ARSS	Derrida, Jacques and Giovanna Borradori. “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides”. In <i>Philosophy in a Time of Terror</i> , 85-136. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
D	“Differance”. In <i>Speech and Phenomena</i> , 129-160. Translated by David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
GSP	“‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”. In <i>Writing and Difference</i> , 154-168. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978.
HQ	<i>Heidegger-La Question de L’être et L’histoire: Cours de l’ENS-Ulm, 1964-1965</i> . Edited by Thomas Dutoit. Collection La Philosophie En Effet. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2013.
IOG	<i>Introduction to The Origin of Geometry</i> . In <i>Edmund Husserl’s The Origin of Geometry: An Introduction</i> , 23-153. Translated with a preface and afterword by John P. Leavey, Jr. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
LI	<i>Limited Inc</i> . Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988.
MP	<i>Margins of Philosophy</i> . Translated by Alan Bass. New York, NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982.
P	<i>Positions</i> . Translated by Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
PGH	<i>The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy</i> . Translated by Marian Hobson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
PP	“Plato’s Pharmacy” in <i>Dissemination</i> , 67-186. Translated by Barbara Johnson. London and New York: Continuum, 2008.
Rogues	<i>Rogues, Two Essays on Reason</i> . Edited by Werner Hamacher. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

SP	<i>Speech and Phenomena</i> . Translated by David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
VM	“Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas”. In <i>Writing and Difference</i> , 79-153. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978.
VP	Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl’s Phenomenology. Translated by Leonard Lawlor. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011.
Voix	<i>La Voix et le phénomène</i> . Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993.

### Works by Edmund Husserl

Crisis	The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology; An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy. Translated by David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
FTL	<i>Formal and Transcendental Logic</i> . Translated by Dorian Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978.
Krisis	Husserliana VI: Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976.
HSW	<i>Husserl: Shorter Works</i> . Edited by Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston. Translated by Robert Welsh Jordan. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
Id I	Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Translated by F. Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983.
L’Origine	L’Origine de la géométrie, traduction et introduction par Jacques Derrida. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010.
LU & LU II	<i>Logical Investigations volumes I &amp; II</i> . Translated by J. N. Findlay. London: Routledge, 2001.
UG	<i>Origin of Geometry</i> . In Jacques Derrida. <i>Edmund Husserl’s The Origin of Geometry</i> :



	<p><i>An Introduction</i>, 157-80. Translated with a preface and afterword by John P. Leavey, Jr. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.</p>
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## Introduction

What is a philosophical treatment of history? This, together with the intimately related question of the philosophy of the other, is perhaps *the* question of the twentieth century. The difficulty of both of these questions is aggravated by the conflicting demands of critical philosophy on the one hand and of a difference which must be thought without dissimulation on the other. In the space of a decade—that momentous decade known as the sixties—Derrida practices a careful attention to this difficulty, an attention that resists dismissing the legitimacy of the concerns on either side. It is an attention that shapes the character of his own philosophical project of deconstruction and its most notable concepts, such as differance, being developed during this time, and it pushes the concerns motivating both principles as far as they will go.

A history which is philosophically adequate must be critical in the Kantian sense—it must account for the conditions of the knowledge it claims. That is, history that is philosophical (or even just not philosophically bankrupt) must be capable of showing with certainty how it is possible for history to be known now. For this reason, it must address itself as much to the present in which historical knowledge is arrived at as it does to the past that is its object. It must be capable of explaining how the present can see and speak of its history. This means avoiding what Foucault called “the surreptitious practices of historians, their pretension to examine things furthest from themselves” (NGH 89) without also and first examining the closest thing—the knowing subject in their historical present. It is to a philosophical history, what he calls ideal history, that Husserl turns, decades after banishing the kind of history later ridiculed by Foucault in terms reminiscent of Husserl’s own attack on the idealist confusions of Galilean science. Seeking historical knowledge that is sufficiently certain to provide the grounding for the truths of the ideal sciences, Husserl is above all concerned to account for those structures of ideality such as language, community, writing, and repeatability that have endowed the present with the capacity to study its past. Having devoted serious study to Husserl for a decade already at the point at which he writes his great book on history in Husserl’s transcendental system—an introduction to an unpublished fragment called by Eugen Fink the *Origin of Geometry*—Derrida assiduously examines and full-throatedly defends Husserl’s strange and counter-intuitive philosophy of history in which timeless structures and teleology rather than anecdotes about an exotic yesteryear are rightly emphasised as its true meaning.

Over against this is the need for a true history not to conceal the remove at which its subject is found by treating the other time of the past as mere appearance-to-the-present. As Derrida notes in his 1964/65 lecture on Heidegger: *Heidegger: La Question de l'Être et de l'Histoire*: “to define the sense of being as *presence* is obviously to reduce historicity” (HQ 213)<sup>1</sup> would be unphilosophical (“n’est pas un geste de philosophe” [213]) because it would dissimulate its subject. In treating history as an appearance to the present, it would conceal exactly what is essential to history—its difference from the present.

This tension drives at the heart of the difficulty of treating history, and since we can no longer, since Hegel, pretend that there is anything in the world that is not historical, begs the attention of any philosophical effort. Modern philosophy’s assiduous self-conscious attention to the present or timeless conditions for the possibility of historical experience and thought includes, nay demands, the recognition of its own limits. It is because we have ceased to be confused about how we know about the past, or to fool ourselves into thinking that it appears to us in itself, that we can recognise that we have failed to do justice to exactly what historicity has demanded we must—a past that precedes the conscious constitution thereof (*viz.*, the present). To put it simply, we have lost the past.

This is, in a sense, a particular species of the complaint voiced against critical philosophy by Quentin Meillassoux: “For it could be that contemporary philosophers have lost the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory - of being entirely elsewhere.” History, like the other, is a problem for philosophy because it confronts us with what must not be merely sublimated by thought.<sup>2</sup>

Husserlean phenomenology represents the bleeding edge of the critical philosophy of history; the point at which its ultimate theoretical articulation pushes it as far as possible to the limit of responsible, self-critical investigation and to the point at which it must succeed or break. A limit to the problem of history was built into Kantian philosophy at the point of its greatest conceptual flaw—the notion of limit itself and in particular of the

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<sup>1</sup> “Définir le sens de l’être comme *presence* c’est bien évidemment réduire l’historicité”

<sup>2</sup> Though the privilege of historicity makes it anything but a species of a greater problem—the historicity of being makes this THE problem of alterity *par excellence*. If reason is the search for origins, as Levinas has it—“All rationality then amounts to the discovery of the origin, the principle.” (131), and Meillassoux is himself primarily interested in the questions of origin.

*in itself*. Given a presupposition of a thing-in-itself, if our experience of historical being is limited by the subjective conditions of consciousness, it does not follow that we are constrained to say that that is all there is of our origin. The noumenal presupposition keeps us from falling into the problem discussed above—of denying the meaningfulness of the past as anything but an appearance in and to the present. The Kantian, as long as he interprets Kant in a certain way rejected by Fichte, can say that what more there is of our coming to be is in an *in itself* to which reason cannot ascend.

Transcendental phenomenology aggravates the problem by denying itself the luxury of this ‘back door’. By reducing existence—that is by recognising that the *things themselves* are not some imagined pure object essentially inaccessible to experience, but the objects of consciousness that make up the only ‘real’, in the sense of meaningful and undeniable, world; the world of experience—phenomenology, when it reduces history to the experience of history does so absolutely. There is no meaningful sense in which a residuum or phantom of the absolute and irreducible past can be posited and held in reserve.

Husserl’s philosophy as a whole makes the way he treats history at last in his final project necessary, if not inevitable. As the only entirely critical—and thus phenomenological—philosophy of history, it is what Husserl would have to produce in order to come to terms with and explain historicity. It is a remarkable and unique work, in part because of the peculiarity of its aim and the single-mindedness with which it is pursued. The double-bind Husserl takes aim at is the difficulty of explaining how it is possible for history, historical experience, and objects of history to be known, in a critical way.

In the origin of geometry, Husserl sets out to account for a miracle. How is it that truth invented in time has come to be universal and immune to time’s vicissitudes? Indeed, the invention of truth seems to indicate a contradiction, and the thought of what has an origin coming to be atemporal seems to confirm its contradictoriness. However, if Husserl is to counteract the forgetting of the meaning of truth that has led us to a crisis of the sciences and of philosophy, it can only be by demonstrating the original meaning of truth—that is to say, the meaning that made the invention of the truth possible—with absolute certainty, and this means showing how truth can have originated.

Only truth with an origin in history can have its meaning grounded in the existing world, the world that can be experienced by a perceiving subject. Without having come into

being at a particular time, there could not be meaningful truth that relates to existence, only empty validities existing in a system of internal coherence; it is in its origin, if nowhere else, that truth has significance to (without necessarily directly *signifying*) experience. An ideal objective truth of the sort in mathematics or geometry, the meaning of which does not refer directly to anything in the world of possible or actual experience, nevertheless contains in its existence the necessity of an origin—an original coming-to-be—and that necessity is the trace of its relation to a meaningful world. This significance, not contained within the truth, but in principle determinable with apodeictic certainty on the basis of its existence as universal truth is what has been forgotten by the sciences. If how it had to have come into being and been made universal and necessary can be worked out without the possibility of error, then it may be possible to reverse this forgetting and *reactivate* the originary significance. This is the purpose of Husserl's philosophical and palliative efforts, and what it is meant to contribute to the project of the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.

While the reactivation of the originary significance of truth is the purpose of Husserl's investigation in the *Origin of Geometry*, the lion's share of work is devoted to accounting for the creation of truth. Much of Husserl's arduous explication is not meant to explain the details of the reactivating meaning and the reactivation of it that would ameliorate the crisis, but to explaining how a scientific tradition that preserves and develops truth in a condition of crisis has been possible. At length and in detail, Husserl explains the complex of ideal and cultural conditions and capacities that were necessary in order for an idea that came into being to be able to become invulnerable to historical accidents and the vicissitudes of time. On a first reading it may not be obvious how this intricate system of truth-creation that Husserl finds in culture relates to the problem of the originating meaning of truth and its forgetting by the sciences that rely on it. The reason is this—in order for the reactivation of original meaning to be possible, the system which preserves the mark of its existence must be determined with certainty and necessity. That is to say, in order to be able to point to the necessity of an origin and then to be able to draw conclusions about its origin it was necessary to prove that the ideal science of (for example) geometry is indeed universally true and not subject to cultural and historical contingency *and* that it can have been created as *objective truth* in every relevant sense. It is only once the possibility of the invention of truth as truth had been accounted for that the originating meaning of the truth could be excavated and reactivated. This is what makes the short, incomplete text so strange—its deeply original goal of the basis of a science of

subjectivity can only be attained by going the other way, as it were, by explaining the conditions of possibility for a kind of historical objective ideality made immune to all historical contingency. The result, counterintuitively, is a defense of objectivity. In his *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*, Derrida explains the purpose of this baroque and to begin with non-obvious project.

To make the point of the *Origin's* enquiry clear, Derrida offers a remarkably robust explication and defence of what Husserl calls ideal history, carefully explaining how Husserl's renewed interest in the significance of history coheres with his much earlier but sustained dislike for history. Since *Logical Investigations* Husserl had consistently opposed any effort to seek an explanation for truths in contingent historically, psychologically, or biologically contingent conditions. Derrida explains that his fresh interest in history is actually in complete accord with the earlier dismissal of history it seems to directly contradict. Here history has been reduced to its essence, allowing its meaning to be recuperated. The importance of history is exclusively in the essential structures of history. Derrida clarifies that it is only what can be determined to have been essential to the coming to be of truth *as truth* (and not as contingent, historically or psychologically peculiar fact) that can have any relevance to the truth or offer any explanation for or of it. A strict, and in some ways counterintuitive, distinction between ideal history and factual history is maintained.

This is the first focus of Derrida's constructive and clarificatory engagement with Husserl in his *Introduction*—the elucidation of the possibility of an eidetically reduced history that would be necessary for the reactivation of originary meaning the forgetting of which constitutes the crisis of European science. But what does eidetic reduction mean when it is applied to something such as history which seems to resist essentialisation? And how do the essential structures of history—the compound of repetition, communication, writing, and others that make history (and truth) possible—correlate with one another? What is their meaning? How do they themselves exist? These are highly technical questions which can be understood from careful attention to their very scanty appearances in Husserl's short text, but which by and large Derrida does not flesh out or clarify. This thesis will start by furnishing the guide to the correct understanding of the astounding account Husserl gives of how concrete historical structures are capable of producing truth which is invulnerable to the winds of time. This more technical account of the function of history could only be accomplished under the guidance of Derrida's explication of the purpose of eidetic history. This is what I have attempted in the first three chapters of this

thesis. Despite the potentially dry and schematic nature of the project, the fact that what is being schematised is a carefully negotiated paradox that defies the conventional oppositions between truth and history should provide no lack of interest.

This account begins where Husserl's most in-depth engagement with history begins, in the critique of European science, philosophy, and culture in *The Crisis of European Sciences* and synoptic lectures and fragments, most notably the *Vienna Lecture* and the *Origin of Geometry*. The first chapter of this thesis will investigate the specifically historical meaning of the crisis, explaining why it is a crisis with a historical meaning and a historical remedy. At the same time, the importance of commencing the study of history with the study of science in its crisis will be discussed—the study of history requires the study of science for the same reason the obverse is true—a grounded critique requires the critical examination of its own foundations, and for history and science the root of them both 'is necessarily one', to paraphrase Derrida (see DH 104). This explains Husserl's defiance of the "ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation and historical... explanation" (UG 172). Something epistemo-historical, historico-epistemic, or epistemologico-historical is called for in which science and history remain undifferentiated. This absolute necessity in order for there to be grounded sense in either history or science motivates the whole course of this thesis. Derrida's clarification not only of the necessity of a unity of science and history, but the way in which their coherence is conceived will guide this study.

It is the eidetic science and the eidetic approach in general that makes history, historiology, historicity, and historical meaning of any kind possible, and therefore a great deal of this thesis will be devoted to giving an account not just of eidetic history, but of ideality in general. This is indispensable because of eidetic science's complexity and because of the diversity of interpretation thereof. For these reasons it is paramount for me to carefully establish the way I will interpret eidetics and the eidetic reduction so as to give ideal history a solid foundation. The necessity of the eidetic does not mean that history is dominated by it—on the contrary, the historical, as eidetic, is essential, so to speak, to essential being. There is no ideality without the possibility of being historical. There are problems with this account—questions as to the adequacy of a reduced history—raised by Derrida. Although I will develop them more completely in the fourth chapter, they begin to emerge at this point. I will indicate where they do so.

There are four points of interpretation of ideality on which my reading hangs, and most of the second and third chapters of part one are occupied with explaining and demonstrating these and exploring their consequences. The first is that all consciousness is eidetic, meaning that any object intended by consciousness is so intended as an essence. The second, a corollary to the first, is that there is no sustained distinction between the eidetic and the ideal in Husserl's philosophy, and that even if such a distinction is intended at points it is untenable because of the teleological structure of the ideal which is shared, as a *telos* (which is to say, as it is), by any essence whatsoever. There are not two different kinds of things, and although ideas and essences do come from 'essentially other origins' and have essentially other contents (See Id I 166), they share in the ideal being which belongs to all being—they are united in *idea*. These two interpretations are argued for in chapter two, "Philosophical foundations of history," and especially in the second section thereof. The purpose of this chapter as a whole is to show why history in general must be ideal history, and to explain what ideal history's methods are. As such, issues will again be raised which will present problems in Derrida's discussion and which will themselves be my subject in the fourth chapter.

The third and fourth points in my interpretation of ideality concern the coherence of possibilities which Husserl identifies in the *Origin of Geometry* as what makes ideal objects possible. These comprise an essential structure of qualities and faculties which create the conditions of possibility for the ideal object; qualities and faculties such as repeatability and writing. Together, these form the coherence of possibilities of the ideal. Their relationship to one-another, and even to ideal objectivity itself, is symmetrical—they depend on each other mutually. However, being ideas, it is not their factual existence which is a condition of possibility, but their possibility. Because ideas are not facts, what they require in order to be possible are other possibilities. The twin characteristics of essential structure are equiprimordiality and possibility, and it is these which bring together reproducibility, community, language, objectivity, and history, (as a non-exhaustive list) because without the possibility of all, not one of these is possible. The third chapter, "The origins of history," is mostly concerned with describing the logic of this equiprimordial coherence of possibilities and in particular the necessity of it for history and of history for it, including writing as another essential possibility.

The fourth chapter changes tack slightly: whereas the first three chapters will have detailed Husserl's science of history directly but under the guidance of Derrida's



clarification of its transcendental aims, the fourth will address the most radical consequences of Derrida's interpretation in his *Introduction*—the notion of delay; that the origin is delayed, deferred. I will address this interpretation directly in Derrida's own explanation of it, just as I will address the more serious and insoluble problems Derrida raises for Husserl in the following and final three chapters. Nevertheless, my aim will remain the same—to understand the problems and possibilities for the thinking of history.

The counter-intuitiveness of Derrida's interpretation of the origin, and specifically the origin of geometry, as delayed can hardly be overstated, and yet it is a profoundly careful reading of the logic of origin. Far from refuting the notion of origin, and Husserl's entire effort to ground meaning in experience, the notion of delay makes sense of it in a radical way that does not avoid its strange logic and convoluted structure. The structure of the origin does not belong simply to the past, since what the origin is the origin *of* is a teleological project still on its way, and an origin can't be an origin until what it is the origin *is*, the origin is itself yet to come. An origin can only be an origin of *something*, and so if that thing is teleologically suspended, then so is its starting point. The delay of the origin, as contradictory as it sounds, is a faithful working out of Husserl's ideal structure of history. As the earlier chapters (especially chapters two and three) will have demonstrated, as an eidetically reduced structure, history concerns possibilities, rather than facts; it is the ideal *possibility* of the truth of geometry that is enabled by the structure of history, which is itself rigorously reduced to ideal possibilities, including the possibilities of repetition, communication, writing, and so on. The idea, and truth is an idea, is not a simply existing thing, completely and adequately given in its present appearance. The idea is teleologically projected in the incomplete appearance and consciousness of it.

My explanation of teleology in the eidetic structure of consciousness in chapter two will have shown why the radical theory of delay does not refute the possibility of determining the origin of ideal objective truth with certainty. It does not dictate the abandonment of all sense and the possibility of science, as it is often taken to. This confusion probably stems from a misunderstanding of the eidetic as a fact, and the resulting expectation that eidetic history be able to provide certainty in the origin of truth as though it were a fact. But truth is not a fact—it is an idea, and its grounding meaning cannot be anything but another idea. What is essential to its potential to be grounded is not factual existence, but its relevance to the essential structure of experience itself. It is an error to think that the event that could ground truth in its originary meaning would have been something that just existed all at once at a given present. This error is tempting, of

course, and it seems at times as though this is Husserl's own way of talking about it when he talks about the concrete historical event of an origin. After all, the concreteness of the event—the fact that it really happened, had to have happened—is what makes historical phenomenology truly historical and not an atemporal unfolding of a logic. But it is the invariance of eidetic reduction in all of Husserl's expressions and theories that makes it appear as such, and if this invariant is forgotten Husserl very quickly begins to appear contradictory. That this deferred structure that is always on its way as a teleological anticipation is what an origin is—this is what Derrida's radical interpretation of its logic shows. It is the only sense that an origin has. It's for this reason that this is among the most thorough and interesting interpretations Derrida gives of Husserl, as well as the most courageous and coherent thinking through of a critical philosophy of history and what that must mean.

But this, of course, is not the end of Derrida's engagement with Husserl, and it is not yet the full flowering of his own philosophical thinking. What pushes Derrida to *deconstruct* transcendental philosophy despite having given it its strongest and most unflinching reading, is most explicitly presented in the newly published and as yet untranslated (though there is a translation currently in the works by Geoffrey Bennington for the Derrida Seminars Translation Project) 1964/65 seminar titled *Heidegger: la Question de l'Être et de l'Histoire*. By ostensibly describing the way Heidegger *destroys* the priority of the present in metaphysics, and in particular by describing the strange status of a *destruction*, an all-out attack that, however, does not refute or criticise, that is, on the contrary also a full-throated *confirmation* of that which it destroys, Derrida reveals more clearly than in any of his texts of the following eight or so years, the period which confirmed his status as an original thinker, what the relationship of his own notion of *deconstruction* is with the metaphysical structures and texts it takes on. Even more specifically relevant to the topic of this thesis—Derrida's description of Heidegger's attack on the critical philosophical project of thinking history on the basis of the present tracks almost coincidentally with Derrida's own.

The seminar presents an excellent starting point for the examination of the problems Derrida explored in published material in the following half-dozen years. I will address two of these—*Voice and Phenomenon*, published in 1968, and "Signature, Event, Context" delivered in 1971. Through the lens of Derrida's clarification of the meaning of Heidegger's project in the 64/65 seminar the aims of Derrida's own texts of the following

years, and the relationship of their deconstructive intervention to his earlier radical but non-deconstructive engagements with Husserl, can be understood more clearly.

Derrida explains Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics as showing the impossibility of thinking history on the basis of the present; that is as the past of a present; what is known of the past by the present; and history as an object of experience given in the present. This destruction marks the end of the project of critical philosophy that was delivered to its zenith by Husserl in his efforts to rigorously mark the conditions for the thinking of history—it is the end of every reduction of history, every critical history, and every genealogy. The problem, already revealed in Derrida's elucidation of the teleological structure of origin, and its consequent marking by delay, is that this notion of origin—though it is the only possible meaning of origin, the only sense it can have, reduces origin to its eidetic sense. Reduction is a Faustian bargain that barterers the making-sense of the origin with that which cannot be made sense of because it cannot be dragged into the timeless presence of the idea—it's historicity. There is an essential belonging-to-a-wholly-other-time of the origin, without which after all it makes no sense.

The sixth chapter, "Death and the infinite," presents a couple 'commentaries' by Derrida which are more challenging to the structure of phenomenology of history, both from Voice and Phenomenon. The first, in which difference (*différance*) is elaborated for the first time in relation to Husserlian phenomenology, returns to the difference which delay had hinted at in the Introduction, but as deconstructive of a reading of phenomenology as relying upon a 'pre-expressive core of sense'. While wholeheartedly adopting the interpretation of the core of experience as incorporating an originary difference, as well as delay (as I will have set up already in the preceding chapter), I will reject the commentary on phenomenology which bases itself on the idea of sense which is independent of (at least the possibility of) expression and language. It is indeed the possibility of these faculties which is demanded for sense.

Derrida's deconstruction of the notion of the sign is one of his most important contributions to the study of Husserl and to philosophy in general. However, I will try to discuss the meaning of this reading and its complex significance for a transcendental history while refraining from engaging rigorously with the substance of Derrida's very intricate argument about the impossibility of excluding the indicating function of the sign. In this chapter, I will restrict my discussion to the question of what the structure of a 'core' would consist in in Husserl's eidetic phenomenology, raising some doubts about

Derrida's commentary on it, but in so doing I will once again maintain that the most robust Husserl is one that accords best with Derrida's radical interpretations.

There is considerable attention paid to Derrida's deconstruction of the Husserlean sign and the possibility of an unproductive reduplication of sense as the basis of meaning, I will briefly review this scholarship and indicate its importance for Derrida's development.

The second commentary moves towards the question of an origin prior to history, a question which delay and difference and the infinitude of the search for origins opened up. It is only a question which phenomenology is incapable of ignoring or leaving unanswered, however, in light of the problem raised in *Voice of the conceivability of infinite difference*. This is problematic, because an origin prior to history, an origin that precedes the meaningful and being itself is beyond the ken of phenomenology. For this reason we must call upon difference as originary difference and deferral and prior to the difference between the positive infinite and infinite difference, and prior to the difference between the infinite and the finite, in order to conceive the infinite difference of transcendentalism and eidetic phenomenology.

The final chapter will re-examine the meaning and structure of origin as an event in the essay "Signature, Event, Context". I will examine the real consequences that Derrida's observation that iterability of meaning entails the impossibility of its absolute determination by an originary meaning has for the project of reactivation that is Husserl's remedy for the crisis of sciences. This chapter will ask what belonging to a tradition means when the origin of it includes the possibility of its revision with infinite potential iterations, a question which will also have been raised by the discussion of the teleological structure of the origin in chapter four. The essential possibility of revision of the signification of what is originated in the origin means that the capacity of an origin to ground truth, and thus the possibility of remedying crisis, is qualified. I will assess the meaning and consequences of this problem.

My desire to understand the way in which I come from a history, a tradition and a community motivates this enquiry. I have pursued this line of study in order to make sense of this indissoluble debt, a debt to which all certainty itself is owed. I hope to understand what it means to owe a debt to history, as well as to community. With that in mind, I would like to thank those without whom this project would have been impossible. My supervisor is Tanja Staehler, whose support and confidence in my ability to accomplish this work has been a great gift, and without whose expertise and guidance I would never have come to

have my world-view turned upside-down by transcendental phenomenology. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Katerina Deligiorgi, for giving me excellent advice on countless occasions, and to thank my examiners, Paul Davies and Leonard Lawlor, for their challenging and inspiring criticisms, as well as for their encouragement.

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## 1 – Transcendental history and wayward sciences

Husserl proposes, in his phenomenology of history, a thoroughly and firmly grounded theory of historical knowledge. For Derrida, the preeminence of the phenomenological approach is self-evident and can only be exceeded by decamping not only the bounds of history but traversing beyond sense and meaning altogether; “phenomenology alone can make infinite historicity appear” (IOG 152). Because sense, as Husserl demonstrates, is historical sense—as Derrida argues, “historicity is *sense*.” (IOG 150)—the dependence of phenomenology on the theory of history is unconditional. The question of history arises, in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, from the need to ground science in meaning. I will begin by explaining the crisis described in that late text by Husserl to show how it is, and can only be, a historical crisis.

In this first chapter, under the heading “Transcendental history and wayward sciences”, I will describe the critique of science and society levied by Husserl, explain why the critique must be historical and begin to address the meaning of that historicity in Husserl’s sense of it, and finally indicate the underlying interdependence of science and history. This chapter consists of four sections; “Hollow and shaky tower of Babel;” “Scion or ‘boy in the attic;’ the embarrassing promise of a European reason;” “Geometry and idea;” and “Galileo’s ‘revealing and concealing genius’”.

The first section explains what the crisis mentioned in the title of Husserl’s book is, beginning with what is referred to by the name of science—that it both pertains to the universal human task of reasoning and the ‘decapitated’ or ‘reduced’ positivist science which dominates. It then goes on to explain how the crisis is diagnosed and what treatment Doctor Husserl prescribes.

The following section; “Scion or ‘boy in the attic;’ the embarrassing promise of a European reason”, discusses the teleology without which neither history nor science exist—a teleology of universal reason. This begins with a description of the temporal complexity of history—its origin in the present whose history it is and its receipt of its characterisation and definition by way of a teleology. Focusing in on the teleology, this chapter will detail Husserl’s use of the Kantian concept of the idea and in what sense the idea as *telos* is both phenomenologically meaningful and prior to understanding. After this,

the particular form of this teleology as a teleology of reason will be addressed together with an attempt to present the basis for Husserl's characterisation of it as simultaneously universal and European, as well as to address Husserl's troubling Eurocentrism (foreshadowing Derrida's own critique of reason and Eurocentrism in *Rogues*).

Section three, called simply "Geometry and idea", brings us into the heart of the matter of history and the geometry that is at issue for it—the ideality that characterises both sciences. This section will contain the most sustained enquiry into the ideal in this chapter with the aim of determining how it comprises geometry. The section begins by going over the three stages of the development of science according to Husserl and how they prepare the way for the current crisis, but focuses in on the first stage—the transition from practical enterprise such as land-surveying to the ideal science of geometry (the subsequent stages will be addressed in the last section of this chapter)—for a thorough investigation of the meaning of the quality (that of ideality) which marks the change. This study is necessary in order to explain the meaning of science and of history as both *ideal*. But before discussing the first stage in detail, I will present the activity which comes before it and which is not a stage of the development of science yet is presupposed by the whole—the 'origin' sought in Husserl's enquiry as the ground of meaning of geometry's truth.

The final section, "Galileo's 'revealing and concealing genius'", explains the last two stages of the development of science and its descent into crisis—Galileo's invention of an ideal and causally-interrelated totality which need only be read with the language of geometry in order to understand it, and the way this relegated the subjective world of experience to an irrational anomalous realm, and the last stage which is science's abdication of its ambition and choice to attend only to what can be "objectively established in this fashion" (Crisis 7). These two stages are described in one 'narrative' in order to explain why the correction of the most serious failings of science since the Renaissance must be addressed by going back to Galileo and the history to which he himself had turned a blind eye. The necessity of tracing our way back in order to set science back on the right track is due to the indispensability of historical enquiry for the accurate diagnosis of crisis.

The critique of science and European culture may seem like an odd place to start for an enquiry into history, and for Husserl the critique is just as much the priority as the phenomenology of history which is called upon to address it, but by the end of this first chapter it should be clear that there is a necessity at work here—that the crisis of science is also the crisis of what it ignores, the historical half of the unity of the epistemic and

historical that the ‘ruling dogma’ of their ‘separation in principle’ has denied (see UG 172). The enquiry into history, like the enquiry into science, therefore, is not a disinterested enquiry for enquiry’s sake—it has a palliative mission. And because history is in crisis, a pure enquiry is impossible without attending to its fever. Neither history nor historicity is an isolate, but part of an interdependent coherence of ideas, as it appears in Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry*, and the philosophy of history is bound to go wrong when it tries to consider it as such in total abstraction. Finally, history is taken up alongside and through the crisis of science because the science of transcendental phenomenology which is the remedy for the crisis is also the only means available for discoursing meaningfully about history, as Derrida remarks on IOG 150.

### ***a. Hollow and Shaky Tower of Babel***

Science is in crisis. And yet, Husserl’s age, like our own (perhaps more than our own), was an age of tremendous empirico-scientific and technological achievement. The preceding two decades had seen the publication of Albert Einstein’s theory of general relativity, Arthur Holmes’ studies of the geological time-scale which finally solved the long-standing mystery of the Earth’s age, Edwin Hubble’s proof that the universe is expanding, and Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg’s discoveries of matter’s wave-like properties, to name just a few examples that come to mind. Husserl was born twenty years before the light bulb was invented and he lived to see the dawn of the automobile and powered flight. Scientific progress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may have outpaced any period before, or since. Even in identifying the crisis, Husserl acknowledges the virtues of the natural sciences, which “we can never cease to admire as models of rigorous and highly successful scientific discipline” (*Crisis* 3-4). In particular, the discipline of physics “was always and remains an exact science... it remains such even if... an absolutely final form of total theory-construction is never to be expected or striven for.” (*Crisis* 4) It is already evident from these passages that in his critique of science Husserl remained opposed to skepticism, just as he had been since his very early work *The Philosophy of Arithmetic*.<sup>3</sup> Far from possessing a Romantic’s disdain for science, his critique was above all

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<sup>3</sup> In *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy*, Derrida interprets Husserl’s early psychologism in *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (published 1891) as induced by the same motivation that drove his entire



conservative in its striving to defend the possibility of rigorous science. It was clear then, as now, that whatever was meant by “the talk, heard so often these days” (*Crisis* 3) of crisis, and however profound science’s putrefaction, the vast accomplishments of science within its elected remit were considered tremendous.

The crisis is not of science such as those who do it have chosen to define and delimit it, but of science such as it ought to be; such as it would be if it did not abdicate its highest responsibilities in what Husserl describes as “The positivistic reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science.” (*Crisis* 5) Science is in crisis because it has neglected to investigate the presuppositions upon which its (in themselves) rigorous theoretical and experimental determinations are grounded.

The only ground for science is experience, because only experience can make something meaningful. This is where Husserl would have the scientist look for their rigour: “the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception” (*Crisis* 49). But in its pursuit of the exactitude of ideal determination, modern science has forgotten the necessity of relating these ideal truths to subjective experience. The truth of an ideal proposition, such as the Pythagorean theorem, is *a priori* secured by the concepts involved, and yet if such true propositions are to have meaning it is only by way of their pertinence to the experience, or to be more precise; possible experiences, upon which they are parasitic. Contrary to the presuppositions of modern scientific practice and to modern philosophy (especially contrary to Kant), Husserl implies that the *a priori* ideal truths of geometry and mathematics are dependent upon *a posteriori* experience not for their truth, which is indeed secured *a priori*, but for the meaningfulness of that truth. A meaningless truth cannot exist. Ideas must be meaningful as well as formally valid in order to be true. For example, the pure formal validity of the Pythagorean theorem, the absolute validity with which the postulates relate to one another in the empty formality of geometrical space, is not enough to make it true. Its truth depends on the meaning of exact spatial description, calculation and prediction of real and possible bodies. Of course there is no need for geometry, which pertains exclusively to ideal space, to refer explicitly to bodies, but without the possibility of making sense of that part of experience which concerns bodily things it would be an empty formalism. Because bodies, though they can be

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life’s work—the erection of an absolute foundation of philosophy; “The idea of an absolute foundation, which will never leave Husserl, is in his eyes still accessible to a psychological science.” (PGH 16f.) When Husserl abandons this project following its criticism by Gottlob Frege, it is only because, according to Derrida, “Husserl begins to find his psychologism insufficient” (PGH 17) for that task—the mission of an absolute foundation itself sustained Husserl through to his last work.

represented in ideal geometrical space, are things given to experience, ideal truth has a direct dependence on experience.

This is not simply a matter of methodological rigour, or a question of insisting on an empty precondition that has long-since ceased exerting influence. That is to say, there is every danger that the achievements of scientific progress, undeniable within their own self-determined realm in which the assumptions on which they are constructed cannot be put in question, meaningfully determinable in principle, may turn out to have a rotting foundation. There is every possibility of this because the geometrical determination of the world always proceeded by way of eliminations; it was necessary for much that comprises the experience of a particular sensible line-shape, or group of like shapes, to be excluded from the pure geometrical concept in order to make its exactitude—the heart and soul of objectivity—possible. For the ideal objectivity of, for example, geometrical linearity to have been determined with ideal exactitude, it was necessary to eliminate the colour, texture, and other sensible features without which no such line could ever be perceived. Geometrical thinking validated the elimination of these other characteristics because they are irrelevant to its pure spatial character. However, without all of these various characteristics which make up the ‘fullness’ of the things of experience, there are no such things as lines.

To a certain extent this simplification is a requisite of the demand for exactitude. The real danger is the subsequent step in which this ideal reduction of the line is disavowed. Idealisation is followed by “the surreptitious substitution of idealised nature for prescientifically intuited nature” (Crisis 49–50)—that is to say; the concealment of the necessity of deriving the ideal object from subjective experience to begin with; the dogmatic and fallacious insistence that what is determined with geometrical rigour is closer to reality than the subjective experience is. Indeed, it is a fallacy endemic to scientific thinking that the mathematically exact description of things in experiment are taken to represent the world as it is in itself more accurately and even more *directly* than the experiences of the experimenters. Those experiences, no doubt, are considered necessary in order for measurement to be collected, but that is merely a disposable methodological necessity that in and of itself is not reliable or accurate. His own experience is a necessary evil in the eyes of the objectivist scientist, and its evil can be purified with the appropriate mathematical rigour.

The success of Galileo and his heirs at producing accurate predictions and thereby at making astounding technological-scientific progress in the limited sense of determining facts does not indicate commensurate progress in the philosophical-scientific task of

discovering what the world is. The certainty derived from predictions confirmed in experiment indicates that a measured feature reliably produces the same or similar measurements, it does not describe the thing on which the measurements are based. The measurements in all their regularity and predictive capacity, ‘describe’ the thing in terms of one property it does not have—mathematical exactitude. Take for example the quantum realm that Husserl never, to my knowledge, concerned himself with; that ‘observations’ of quantum ‘phenomena’ produce reliable results that can be put to use in technological production and instrument-based experimentation that cannot be explained by classical physics is above doubt, however it cannot be said that on this basis any knowledge of the existence of things at the quantum level is acquired. The absolute impossibility of any sensible counterpart or counterbalance to the purely mathematical and metrical meaning of quantum phenomena throws into relief how great a distance there is between mathematically precise predictions and objects of experience which in the macro world are supposed to ground them. This distance reveals itself with respect to the spatial-sensible metaphors it requires us to invent in order to understand the quanta. For example, when quantum physicists talk about spin as an intrinsic property of elementary particles, they do not mean anything *like* what we experience in real bodies as spin. Indeed—we can never know what the quantum effect called ‘spin’ is *like*. The same goes for their description as particles. ‘Spin’ and ‘particle’ are meaningful ideas because they pertain to sensible phenomena with multiform characteristics. However, the behavior of elementary particles that measurement indicates does not even, as the physicist will say, resemble these phenomena. It cannot, because the meaning of what is described as ‘spin’ in quanta is not sensible—it is not the case that if we were shrunk down with a shrink-ray to a small enough size we would then be able to feel or see the spin of particles—what is described metaphorically as spin is the postulated correlate of measurements, and as such it only has ideal meaning, strictly speaking. A sensible phenomenon, *spin* belongs to an entirely other order. Of course, it can be borrowed by the ideal as a metaphor, but the metaphoricity is too easily forgotten or dissimulated because the temptation is too strong to imagine that the measurements of physicists’ experiments bring us closer to knowledge of the phenomenal structure of the quanta, to a knowledge of what they are ‘like’, a knowledge that we not only do not have, but that is impossible. There is no phenomenality of the quanta. The recourse to sensory metaphors to flesh out a picture of what is never given but can only be described in its ideal mathematical coherence is a testament to the paucity

and non-phenomenality of quantum physics (a paucity that does not impinge on its technological success).

Because the ideal is derived through a simplifying process that is subsequently concealed, the entire edifice is held aloft by its own assumptions. While the sciences are, at least in principle, held to the highest standards of duplicability of experiments, they are never expected to plumb their own foundations. As a result, scientific rigour consists in careful scrutiny of the measurements and standards of measurement used in experiments to derive their objective data; scrutiny which can only proceed by comparison with yet other measurements, actual and predicted. There is neither requirement nor support for the enquiry into the relation of measurement itself to the world it is meant to describe, but which can only ever be described roughly and by way of exclusions. This confirmationist program means that in the infinite aspects of experience eliminated from scientific consideration in its pursuit of exactness, there lurks worlds which science has not begun to explore. Moreover, the one that it does explore—line and number—is nowhere to be found in the real world, it is merely an artificial simplification of myriad other qualities.

The diagnosis of the crisis is the destruction of what Husserl calls “the ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation and historical, even humanistic-psychological explanation” (UG 172). As the crisis of the forgetting of truth-meaning, the crisis of science shows that truth’s transcendence of its conditions and of every determinate context cannot be confused with an absolute independence of ideal truth from subjective experience, even though to a careless or dogmatic eye it may appear to be. What that eye misses, of course, is meaning—the necessity for truth of a meaning beyond its mere formal validity. The motivation for this is clear: the necessity for truth to transcend every finite context in order to be infinite and unconditioned is mistaken for a need for a radical and absolute absence of relation. The only real possibility for transcendence is not complete absence, however, but is to be found in the recognition that transcendence is not absolute otherness, but is itself a kind of relation. The only meaningful transcendence is transcendence through absolute universality—transcendence of the kind dreamed of in an absolute independence is nothing but a logical fantasy. Rigorous determination of the meaning of ideal objectivity must come from the careful enquiry into this relation.

Husserl here as everywhere else is concerned with defending and thinking through the ideal universality of truth, and the ‘reactivation’ of truth-meaning that would

counter its forgetting is no different. The conditions that he points to in history and context are not particular but essential and universal. The particularities and idiosyncrasies which make each cultural and historical context absolutely unique are not what can ground the meaning of universal truths. The originary meaning of mathematics or geometry can be nothing other than the universally general structure of subjective experience. Only a universal structure of experience could ground unconditioned truth in meaning. On the other hand, a truth the meaning of which pertained to a culturally and historically specific experience could only have particular and culturally contingent validity.

Universal validity requires a ground of “apodictically general content, invariant throughout all conceivable variation” (UG 179) such as that indicated at the end of the *Origin of Geometry*, a fascinating fragmentary text synoptic with the *Crisis*: “this much is certain as an invariant, essential structure; that [the context for the invention of geometry] was a world of ‘things’... that all things necessarily had to have a bodily character” (UG 177). That things, things with bodies, must have occupied the lifeworld of the inventor of geometry in order for it to have been possible for them to have come up with an idealization of pure spatiality can be determined with necessity—otherwise their idealisations would not have had any meaning for them or their fellows. The meaning of something like ideal geometry cannot be found in a historically, geographically, or culturally specific experience such as the type of stretched rope, with its particular color, warp and woof, if it had one, and its tendency to become caked with mud, that the land-surveyors of Egypt to whom Herodotus attributes the invention of geometry used to do their surveying. Nor can they be found in the wet, fecund soil of the Nile flood-plain itself. Instead, meaning must be located in the more general and invariable character of experience of a world of things with bodies to which shape might be ascribed that made it possible for those proto-geometers, as Husserl counts them, to purposefully measure and divide the farmland with their ropes, and for their intellectual heirs to later invent a perfection of measurement which exceeded any possible sensible determination. We cannot imagine the invention of a science of shape without a world of bodies to which shapely characteristics can be ascribed, just as, reason dictates, we cannot imagine the invention of a science of number without objects in the world that are capable of being distinguished and counted.

This is not to say that the science of shape pertains to any particular shape or shapes, but it is inconceivable without shape in general. It is only ‘apodictically general’ preconditions of this type that could proffer the meaning-ground for a truth which is itself universal, otherwise the meaning the truth would have must constrain it to a particular and

contingent condition for meaningfulness. The facts and figures described in Herodotus' account are of this kind; the mythical king Sesostris, the tax he levied on equally divided portions of the land, and the annual flooding of the Nile that divided the land in its own way (see Herodotus, *Histories* bk. II ¶109). Although they are essential to Herodotus' brief story, and are essential to the meaning of the particular measurements taken by the land-surveyors, they have no hold over the meaning of land surveying in general, nor the geometrical science that came out of it, nor can they offer anything to explain the meaning of the art or the science in general until they have been reduced to their most general and essential content. This will be, for starters, something like, the infinitely exact measurement of bodily things. By ignoring these contingent facts and looking only to what is itself universal and necessary in the context as that which is to provide meaning, the connection of truth to context can be recognized while still keeping relativism at bay. Thus, Husserl's recourse to the lifeworldly context of ideal truth's meaning retains the intent of ideal universality to transcend the finite cultural conditions of its origin and aspire to unconditioned universality.

This is why Husserl declares that his recourse to historicity will exclude historiology from the get-go: "No one would think of tracing the epistemological problem back to such a supposed Thales. This is quite superfluous." (UG 172) The personalities are irrelevant, but so is the more strictly intellectual-historical question of the propositional content of the originating idea:

The question of the origin of geometry... shall not be considered here as the philological-historical question, i.e., as the search for the first geometers who actually uttered pure geometrical propositions, proofs, theories, or for the particular propositions they discovered, or the like. Rather than this, our interest shall be the inquiry back into the most original sense in which geometry once arose, was present as the tradition of millennia, is still present for us, and is still being worked on in a lively forward development; we inquire into that sense in which it appeared in history for the first time—in which it had to appear, even though we know nothing of the first creators and are not asking after them.

(UG 158)

For the history Husserl is determined to plumb, archival, historiographic, or even archaeological research is useless—it is insufficiently profound or ancient, provides the wrong type of evidence, is too prone to error, and above all concerns facts which do not reach the necessary generality for grounding geometrical meaning. What is remarkable about this is that anything which could provide evidence of peculiarity, of the influence on the origin of geometry of a characteristic that is not universal, is excluded from the outset. Only introspection to determine the essential general characteristics of geometry's

originary meaning is capable of pinpointing what was essential to the origin, and excluding anything which could only have been contingently related to its meaning.

The method for this is a historical twist on Husserl's already established technique of imaginary variation:

But we also have, and know that we have, the capacity of complete freedom to transform, in thought and phantasy, our human historical existence and what is there exposed as its life-world. And precisely in this activity of free variation, and in running through the conceivable possibilities for the life-world, there arises, with apodictic self-evidence, an essentially general set of elements going through all the variants; and of this we can convince ourselves with apodictic certainty. Thereby we have removed every bond to the factually valid historical world and have regarded the world itself [merely] as one of the conceptual possibilities.

(UG 177)

The procedure of imaginary variation should arrive at characteristics which have been determined to be invariable because they are requisite for experience itself or for the invention of something like geometry. For this reason when Husserl finally explicitly reveals what he has in mind—characteristics which are along the lines of ‘things with bodies’—the thinness of his characterisation could be utterly disappointing.<sup>4</sup> The generalities of ideal history don't offer much in the way of story.

These invariable generalities may appear so general as to be impotent. We might wonder; what meaning could be derived from such a general knowledge, and how could it ground anything? However, Husserl might have replied that in this most general of generalities there is already meaning which is absent from the geometrical science—geometry does not concern bodies, but mathematical relations governing objects in ideal space. This is important because bodies possess a whole range of essential properties and characteristics beyond the spatial properties with which geometry is exclusively concerned. These essential properties are involved in the meaning of geometry, then, even if they are absent from geometry itself.

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<sup>4</sup> Derrida consoles this disappointment with a stern glance: “And the annoyed letdown of those who would expect Husserl to tell them *what really happened*, to tell them a story [*leur raconte une histoire*], can be sharp and easily imaginable: however, this disappointment is illegitimate.” (IOG 65) This chiding tone is there because these readers are foolish to be disappointed that they have not been told a story when what they have been given is something more profound—real history. Derrida continues to contrast profound philosophical enquiry with this tendency to ‘*raconter des histoires*’ that other forms of explication, including the sciences and theology engage in. In his 1964/65 lecture course on Heidegger he brings its pejorative weight to bear: “toute explication ontique en elle-même revient à raconter des histoires” (every ontic explication in itself comes back to telling stories; see HQ 61)

It will not be immediately apparent how the recourse to only the most essential and general characteristics of the origin can be of any help in the critical effort to bring attention to the limited context of the origin. It may appear as though Husserl has returned to ideal and formal generalities, through what was only a detour of history. True, what has been retained is as universal as geometrical postulates. However the fundamental association of ideal truth to a culture and to a subject, not in such a way that it is merely the product of its context—as in a historicism such as *Weltanschauungsphilosophie* or historical materialism which by reducing truth to its context would constitute a denial of truth itself—but in a profoundly interdependent sense, changes the whole meaning of universality. Certainly, the only characteristics of that culture and its subject are so universal that they can easily be mistaken for being banal. But despite picking out only that about the origin which is universal, it still makes the relation to a concrete origin both absolutely certain and persistently relevant. Thus, reference to a historical actuality is ineluctable and intrinsic to the meaning of ideal truth.



## ***b. Scion or ‘Boy in the Attic’; The Embarrassing Promise of a European Reason***

The crisis is historical, but that certainty leads to the question; ‘how historical is history?’. Is history ever ‘pure’? There are a couple different axes to this question: for one, there is the dichotomy between history as structure—an atemporal law of unfolding which legislates what happens in history yet is itself presupposed as invulnerable to its vicissitudes—and as genesis (which would be that change itself). This dichotomy, of great concern to Derrida throughout his writing on Husserl up to *Voice and Phenomenon*<sup>5</sup>, was a problem of currency at the time during which Derrida was writing on Husserl. Derrida presented his essay “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, which borrows its title from Jean Hyppolite’s *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, at a conference on this problem in 1959 with Jean Piaget and Maurice de Gandillac, the proceedings of which were later published (in 1965) as *Entretiens sur les notions de Genèse et de Structure* (see DH 24 and YD 115fn). The title of Derrida’s *Mémoire*, the rough equivalent of a Masters thesis, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure—*The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy*—also alluded to this issue, and Edward Baring notes that “the question of the *Mémoire* was clearly Normalien<sup>6</sup>” (YD 114). I will therefore leave this question aside for the present, so to speak, and focus on the second axis of the problem of the historicity of history.

The second is what temporal ‘space’ history occupies. History concerns the past, but not only the past. It is at first unclear whether its temporal complexity compromises or betrays it. “The past is never dead. It’s not even past,” wrote William Faulkner (Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*). Unlike unreflective factual history (if such a non-philosophical discipline is possible—a claim to history without theory will almost certainly be discovered to conceal a naive and dogmatic presupposition of its theoretical framework), history which is to be self-reflexive and ground itself by establishing or determining the conditions and structures of historicity itself, awkwardly enough, cannot confine itself to the lone dimension of the past—it requires the retrospective of a present from which to launch any regressing inquiry (*Rückfrage*). Husserl suggests that historical inquiry would be circular, or a

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<sup>5</sup> Lawlor writes that in *Voice and Phenomenon* “The problem of the sign has come to replace, for Derrida, the problem of genesis.” (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 166)

<sup>6</sup> Meaning, of the Ecole Normale Supérieure.

“zigzag pattern” (Crisis 58): “The understanding of the beginnings is to be gained fully only by starting with science as given in its present-day form, looking back at its development.” (Crisis 58) The crucial understanding of the origins *as origins* can be accomplished only on the basis of an already mature science and understanding of that science. Without this retrospective, the originating character of the origins is incomprehensible. Derrida explains this necessity: “I must start with ready-made geometry, such as it is now in circulation and which I can always phenomenologically read, in order to go back through it and question the sense of its origin.” (IOG 51) However, this ‘retrospective’—and any understanding of science—requires historical knowledge to begin. It is for this reason that Husserl describes a circular or zig-zag pattern: “Relative clarification on one side brings some elucidation on the other, which in turn casts light back on the former.” (Crisis 58) Derrida calls this “only the pure form of every historical experience” (IOG 51)

Yet the temporality which we might almost be tempted to call ‘*Ek-static*’ is not limited to the present and its ‘zig-zag’ movement. Even stranger, and perhaps more important, is the destiny of history—its teleological meaning. The future is essential to the historical criticism Husserl mounts, because it could only be against the *idea* of science that the present state of modern science can be judged and found wanting. The retro view alone, if there even is such a thing, is not sufficient to support a critical evaluation. The idea of science, which is its *telos*—the future possibility of science’s identity with its idea—is necessary for the historical appraisal which identifies the current impoverishment of science and allows it to be characterised pejoratively as ‘in crisis’. The changes in the sciences from the Renaissance to our time can constitute a crisis for no other reason than that they are the disappointment of real progress towards a *telos*, the disappointment of the progress of science towards identity with itself in its own idea. Past, present and future are thought together from the start in Husserl’s teleological history; “It [the crisis] concerns not the scientific character of the sciences but rather what they, or what science in general, had meant and could mean for human existence.” (Crisis 5) That is, the crisis is recognisable as such (and the recognisability or appearance of crisis is one of the most important and challenging goals of phenomenology at this stage in Husserl’s development of it, and that most urgently calling for a rigorous thinking of history) because of what is discernible in its history, taken together with the potentiality which on the one hand may be discerned in that history—not as bare facts but as the meaning of science itself—and on

the other makes it possible to detect and understand that history at all. Without an internal logic oriented toward the potential to which history's trajectory may, in the so-called 'zigzag pattern', be tending *in fact*, as a comparison, there could not be any evaluative claim derived from the historical reflection. Without the idea of science as a *telos* what is called crisis could never be subject to anything but description as a moment in history, distinct from the moment of a Renaissance ambition (which could no longer be regarded as a pinnacle), but lacking any grounds for the comparison between the two necessary in order to claim that the modern is a betrayal of the Renaissance's potential. It is, after all, only teleologically that this potential, the idea of science, exists; the crisis itself shows that in fact this potential is currently disappointed. Science such as it is in our time is not the pure exercise of human reason, the transcendence of the human beyond its finitude, but a more complicated and compromised thing. This means that the meaning of science cannot be derived after the fact from the observation of science's actual function because observation and description provide no grounds for preferring the reason inhering in modern science to the irrationality it also manifests.

But science is precisely this—an *idea*. Far from a perfect attainment of wisdom or the capacity of absolute knowledge, science is an infinite task—it is the idea of an undertaking which infinitely exceeds what is attained within it. Science is the manifestation of reason's transcendence of the finitude of the rational subject; or rather, it is the idea of this manifestation. As Husserl puts it in the Vienna lecture; "Mathematics—the idea of the infinite, of infinite tasks—is like a Babylonian tower: although unfinished, it remains a task full of sense, opened onto the infinite. This infinity has for its correlate the new man of infinite ends." (Cited IOG 128)<sup>7</sup> It is only because science exists as the idea of rational enquiry before the fact that science is the infinite project that it is and not whatever compromised and finite human exercise it happens to be at a particular historical moment. This understanding of the idea as teleological is fundamental to phenomenology, and, according to phenomenology, to science in general.

The inherent teleology in the structures of phenomena, and in the form of the idea in the Kantian sense in particular, is an important feature of Husserl's philosophy which Derrida makes paramount, and it will be explored in depth throughout this thesis. It is at least demanded by the pervasive logic of the idea in the Kantian sense, which I will discuss

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<sup>7</sup> Taken by Derrida from Paul Ricoeur's translation of a different version of the Vienna lecture from that published by David Carr, published as "La Crise de l'humanité européenne et la philosophie". See translator's note IOG 129fn

in chapter six. In short, in the absence of a teleology all evaluation would be nullified, and indeed even ‘simply’ descriptive history would fail to appear.

The shape of history’s teleological progress is sketched out in *Crisis* section six—“The history of modern philosophy as a struggle for the meaning of man.”—as the *telos*, “inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy” (Crisis 15), of reason, universality and humanity. These principles are the core motivations of the critique—it is the threat to humanity (and these principles which cannot be dissociated from humanity) which make the crisis of the European sciences matter, but they are concerns which belong to us (those of us affected by the crisis) teleologically. The possibility of teleology is bound up with the possibility of science and humanity. Indeed, it is from the thought of the human that the thought of teleology springs: “what is essential to humanity as such, its *entelechy*” (Crisis 15) because the essential distinguishing characteristics of the human, if any such exist at all, are not actual possessions, but possibilities, potentialities, entelechies, and teleologies. The human is nothing without its goal of transcending what it is, a thinking which is put most quintessentially by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but in a negative form:

Humanity still has no goal.

But tell me, my brothers: if humanity still lacks a goal, does it not also still lack – humanity itself? –

(Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 44)

The characteristics of humanity mentioned by Husserl are old familiar ones—sociality, rationality—but here it is their potentiality as much as anything else that is decisive, especially since it radically modifies the sense of the old familiar characteristics.

Yet, in teleology some of the doubt of Zarathustra’s question remains. It is philosophy itself which makes humanity, or at least has the potential to. While the essentiality of the sociality is not denied—“to be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization” (Crisis 15)—and neither is that of rationality—“if man is a rational being (animal rationale), it is only insofar as his whole civilization is a rational civilization, that is, one with a latent orientation toward reason” (Crisis 15), there remains a question as to ‘man’s rationality’ and possibly as to his sociality also; an ‘if’, thrown into relief especially at the moment of crisis. This question remains only because there remains a question as to whether humanity, and universalism, means anything. Reason and sociality are teleological determinants of humanity, not naturalistically

defined capacities which a predetermined entity ‘man’ is deemed to ‘possess’. Both ‘man’ and ‘sociality’ without reason and philosophy are at most incomplete concepts, lacking the universality that belongs to them essentially, if teleologically. The ‘if’ concerning man’s rationality conceals the existential necessity of reason for humanity in the doubt as to man’s *factual* existence—the uncertainty whether there in fact is such a thing as humanity. This is what is meant by Husserl’s strange claim that “the vitality of [‘the actual and still vital philosophies’, which is to say philosophies which have not given in to scepticism] consists in the fact that they are struggling for their own true and genuine meaning and thus for the meaning of a genuine humanity.” (Crisis 15) Reason, and specifically ‘philosophical reason’ (peculiarly and problematically European in a way I will examine shortly), is that whereby the idea of the human is conceivable: “Philosophy and science would accordingly be the historical movement through which universal reason, ‘inborn’ in humanity as such, is revealed.” (Crisis 15)

Because it is teleological, the claims that reason is “‘inborn’ in humanity as such” (Crisis 16) and essential to “the meaning of a genuine humanity” (Crisis 15) are finally very different from the pseudo-Aristotelian claims they resemble; that man is the *animal rationale* (*ζῷον λογὸν ἐκόν*), a claim Husserl even cites (see Crisis 15); here the rationality belongs to the universal essence of humanity, not to the individual (except insofar as that individual is human, i.e. united socially). It is not as an animal or an organism that rationality is part of our nature, but as members of a “socially and generatively united civilization” (Crisis 15). It is a *telos* in a sense not completely unrelated to Heidegger’s use of ‘*existentialia*’ in *Being and Time* as contrasted with categories (see Heidegger, *Being and Time* 70-71)—the intent is to examine humanity without determining its character in advance according to an already uncritically accepted ‘scientific’ determination.

This is what makes reason vulnerable to crisis. The existential necessity of reason is not a ‘natural’ attribute of an animal, more or less active and realised but never altogether eliminable, it is contingent upon the ‘vitality’ of the ‘struggle’ for the “true and genuine meaning” (Crisis 15) of true philosophy. Here again the extraordinary teleologicality of the meaning of humanity is central; it is not the full possession in actuality of the “true and genuine meaning” of philosophy which is necessary, it is the *struggle* for meaning and the potentiality of meaning. If this struggle is itself threatened—and in crisis it is—so too is humanity itself!

If there are eyebrows that the title of the project did not already raise, then those eyebrows should be raised by now with all this talk about ‘*European* humanity’ and the sort of vanguard role it is said to play in the constitution of humanity itself. It will no doubt be necessary to critically examine this restrictive cultural vision, but beforehand it is crucial to understand what is meant by European and ‘Europeanness’ and why it is essential to humanity in general—indeed, we must explain how such a thing is possible; that a culturally specific tradition could be universally essential. What is important in ‘European humanity’ is the yet-unrealised manifold: reason-universality-humanity, and universality perhaps chiefly and most paradoxically. It is only within the European tradition of reason (or as Derrida more frequently specifies it, the Greek tradition), that the idea of universality (or at least this particular universality—the uniquely and exclusively western-philosophical conception of universality with which the whole scope of this thesis and the research which has gone into it is already wrapped up and enclosed), and therefore the idea of humanity as such, presents itself. It is not so much that we must be European as that *we* must be European; only insofar as we are European do we belong to the united civilisation of humanity that is a European idea, and one which even in the western tradition to which it belongs has been far from constant.<sup>8</sup> It is the ideal of universal human reason that makes it possible to speak of something like humanity. Only if we possess the *telos* of universal reason, which is European in origin,—only insofar as we belong to that particularity do we, contradictorily, belong to the universal. Only in universal reason is there *humanity* as such, and therefore only by being European are we a ‘we’. The emphasis on Europeanity is a recognition of the particularly European context of the origin of the ideal (or at least of this particular form of the ideal) of universality itself. In fact, the particularly European universality need not be interpreted as an exclusive universality—it is entirely possible that there are other universalities,<sup>9</sup> as it is entirely possible that there are not, but in any case

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<sup>8</sup> See Bernasconi, Robert "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in Bernasconi (ed.), *Race* (2001): 11–36, and Bernasconi, Robert "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up: The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy," *Radical Philosophy* 117 (2003): 13–22 for a clear-eyed treatment of Kant's racist views. In the latter of these articles, Bernasconi writes; "He never resolved the problem of how to reconcile his belief in cosmopolitanism with his racism, but this left a dangerous legacy, one which he occasionally glimpsed." (Bernasconi 2003 p. 19)

<sup>9</sup> I refrain from undertaking an effort to answer this question because of difficulties regarding the method for undertaking any ‘cross-cultural’ study necessary for doing so; difficulties which in fact make an answer impossible. Any study attempting to answer the question of what is or is not found in other cultural contexts would have to first establish the means for; one, intercultural communication; and two, establishing proof. The possibility of satisfying these conditions depends on the obliteration in advance of the separation of cultures presupposed by the question, either through a universal common-ground or through the imposition of one culture's language and

they are not \*our\* universality (a distinction that raises further difficulties). The disagreeable, even chauvinistic, emphasis on Europe's particular role in philosophy's claim to the universal is requisite for an otherwise challenging, even progressive, recognition of the hidden structure of particularity and singularity behind any claim to universality (so often necessary) within philosophy or discourse at large. The alternative to this discourse is only what is for the most part done in philosophy: the concealment of the cultural peculiarity of reason and universality, the uncritical and unreflective assumption that the truth of reason and universality does not have a culturally specific origin. We are then stuck between a rock and a hard place—pretending that there is no 'outside' of universal humanity on the one hand or designating humanity itself as culturally specific on the other.

Of course this is an idea of humanity and 'Europeanness' that should at the very least make us uncomfortable, but apart from in a few inessential but plainly and simply racist moments, such as when, in the Vienna lecture, Husserl specifies what he means by 'European' as a 'spiritual' (*geistige* [see *Krisis* 317]) category that includes far-flung present and former colonies but excludes 'Eskimos' and 'Gypsies',<sup>10</sup> that discomfort need not necessarily be a resistance to Husserl—the contradictions between our philosophical notion of universality and its particular European context is very much a tension that Husserl wants to bring to light and make problematic within ideal history. It is a real problem which most philosophers and right-thinking, progressive people are content to ignore—what underpins the philosophical claim that there is such a thing as humanity—and how are we to treat the fact that this foundation excludes other traditions and other cultures? Even this contradiction arises only in the case that the teleology of a universal, rational, humanity is proven to indeed belong to 'European humanity', which thus far is uncertain. However, the cost of giving up this manifold of ideas, as we will see when I

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reason over another. Concretely, the proper form for addressing the question in this context—in the context of an academic dissertation—would be to either report research undertaken using the methods of anthropology, or to undertake original research using these methods. However, to do so would be already to limit oneself to what can be assimilated to or accommodated by (to borrow from Jean Piaget) the European project of reason to which anthropology absolutely belongs. As François-René de Chateaubriand wrote in *Voyage en Italie*, "Every man carries within himself a world made up of all that he has seen and loved; and it is to this world that he returns, incessantly, though he may pass through and seem to inhabit a world quite foreign to it."

<sup>10</sup> "Thus we refer to Europe not as it is understood geographically, as on a map, as if thereby the group of people who live together in this territory would define European humanity. In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not." (*Crisis* 273) It is conspicuous that Husserl did not also specify Europe's other 'wanderers', the other group the membership in Europe is perennially in question and especially

return to the question of Europe and universal human reason in the sixth and seventh chapters of this thesis to discuss Derrida's concerns and criticisms, would be perhaps literally inconceivable. The consequences of ideal history and its limits with respect to questions of cultural relativism and a certain philosophical imperialism are one of my motivations for this study. Four decades after the bulk of his 'output' on Husserl, Derrida returns to Husserl by thematising precisely the question of universality and reason and their relationship with European peculiarity and hegemony in *Rogues*;<sup>11</sup> "Whether armed or disarmed, the great question of reason would already begin to unfurl its sails for a geopolitical voyage across Europe and its languages, across Europe and the rest of the world." (Rogues 119)<sup>12</sup>

Crisis and critique depend on the strange logic of the *telos*. As James Dodd explains: "The articulation of crisis is guided by a sensitivity to the difference between the ideal of science and its historical manifestation." (James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection* 41) It is easy to imagine the kind of problem this would present. The question presents itself whether teleology, or the idea—*what is not yet*—can ever even in principle be posited, and whether in particular it can be in the case of crisis. Without the absolute priority of the idea, teleology itself would be teleologically suspended. Only the success of Husserl's project to ameliorate the crisis and restore the teleology of universal human reason could demonstrate the operation of the teleology which makes critique possible. The hope would lie in the *telos* which is not yet known to exist, and in the 'as yet unconcluded'-ness of the "as yet unconcluded movement [of modern philosophy]" (Crisis 16). Only if the crisis' solution proved successful (and this is far from certain) and this movement were concluded in a way that accordingly fulfils the destiny of humanity would the accusations and claims of Husserl's critique be shown to have been true. The corollary of this is that if the solutions failed—due to the severity and irreversibility of the crisis—then it would have been impossible to ascertain the truth of these criticisms, since the teleology would not be fulfilled. If the crisis went unresolved, we would never have been able to say that we were in crisis, just as we are not fully able to say that we are in crisis now. We would remain

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then at the moment of the delivery of that address, which followed increasingly virulent attacks and boycotts of and against Jews and Jewish businesses.

<sup>11</sup> In the second part—"The 'world' of the Enlightenment to come (Exception, Calculation, and Sovereignty)"

<sup>12</sup> Derrida gives more precise voice to a familiar worry, perhaps best and most plaintively put by Claude Lévi-Strauss; "The great civilization of the West has given birth to many marvels; but at what cost!" (Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* 39)



incapable of distinguishing whether criticism of science or outright skepticism of science were appropriate. This question should be in the background of the remainder of the discussion, but I will address it head-on in my last chapter.

If the crisis is only crisis because there is a potential of science which is currently disappointed, then is the crisis a sort of hypothesis which cannot be proven while crisis continues? Is the crisis conditional upon the remedy of the crisis? If crisis is nothing but the derailment of the idea of science, then where is the evidence for that idea—is not crisis exactly the lack of idea—a certain being out of ideas? Approached from the perspective of a philosophy which did not take the futural orientation of experience seriously, this would appear as the aporia of critical work in a time of crisis (and because those are the times which warrant critical work, an aporia of critique in general). Crisis would be exactly what proscribes the identification of crisis, which is to say that crisis would be the proscription of crisis itself. The critical present in which all we can see of the great project of universal human reason is “the as yet unconcluded movement [of modern philosophy]” (Crisis 16) which of course has not “*proved* to be the entelechy, properly started on the way to pure realization” (Crisis 16)<sup>13</sup> is not evidence of a *telos* of infinite reason. If there is no sure evidence for the idea does it not remain merely hypothetical, deprived of any evaluative force? If the structure of teleology is essentially without completely adequate evidence, does that suffice for it to defy the evidence of the present viewed without that teleological frame? Or does the impossibility of evidence of the idea mean that the regulative idea is, if not simply nonsense, at least not phenomenologically justified?

Conversely, is it possible that the impossibility of evidence of the idea is merely apparent and the consequence of misconstruing the meaning of *telos* and the way in which it *is* given in teleology? The idea appears, but its appearance must be understood correctly and with strict attention to the limits of that appearance. As teleological, the idea appears inadequately because by necessity something we might call its ‘fulfillment’ is not given, which is the reason Husserl stipulates it as an infinite idea—it is the idea which is not adequate or complete, not capable of being made definite. The idea appears, first of all, as the non-givenness of its content.

As Fichte employs it, the concept of the idea separates the teleological goal from the certainty of its attainment, yet allows it to continue to orient intention and practical reason: “We are speaking, rather, of an idea of the self which must necessarily underlie its

infinite practical demand, though it is inaccessible to our consciousness, and so can never appear immediately therein (though it may, of course, mediate, in philosophical reflection).” (Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* 244) The discourse of the *superman* (*Übermensch*) in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is also an effort to describe the future-oriented essence of humanity which teleology is at its most essential and structural. For both Husserl and Nietzsche it is impossible to make sense of the human, as well as science and life respectively, if we take it simply as *present* or treat the relationship to the future as neutral. I will discuss Nietzsche’s theory of future-orientation as it is presented in the related discourses of the superman and of overcoming, because the rigour with which he determines teleology as indefinite will help understand the very different and more specific but still rigorous evidence-based treatment of the infinite idea in Husserl.

Earlier in this section I quoted the last lines of Nietzsche’s “On a Thousand and One Goals” from *Zarathustra*, in which it is implied that there is no humanity without a universal goal, but that there nevertheless is no such goal apparent. To go beyond, to overcome, to have a goal is fundamental to humanity and to life for Nietzsche. Zarathustra presents overcoming, with characteristic gravity and zeal, as a defining characteristic of life, being “that which must overcome itself again and again.” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 138) However, because Nietzsche has roundly disavowed the hope for transcending human life, whether it be in the form of the Christian thought of a life to come (he calls Christians and all other spiritualists ‘afterworldsmen’) or the Stoic elimination of certain traits or facts from what can be considered essential,<sup>14</sup> as forms of ‘nihilism’, the overcoming of life cannot be by anything other than life itself. This strange logic of overcoming of humanity itself by itself is the reason Zarathustra can say in the same breath: “I teach you the Superman” and “do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes!” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 42). In fact, Nietzsche more often describes it from the converse perspective—not that the human is overcome, but that the human is still to come. This idea—that what is being experienced and described is still on its way—pops up all over *Zarathustra*. Zarathustra’s ‘first discourse’, on the ‘last man’, is simultaneously his prologue: “And here ended Zarathustra’s first discourse (*Rede*), which is also called ‘The Prologue’

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<sup>13</sup> The sense of this quotation is altered slightly in that it is itself put as a hypothetical in the text, but since the entire supposition of crisis depends on this understanding of the present, its interrogative phrasing can be seen as somewhat rhetorical.

<sup>14</sup> “your pride wants to dictate and annex your morals and ideals onto nature – yes, nature itself –, you demand that it be nature ‘according to Stoa’ and you want to make all existence exist in your own image alone – as a huge glorification and universalization of Stoicism!” (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 10)

(*Vorrede*)” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 47); the thing is the thing preceding the thing. The thing and what precedes the thing—the very thing it has overcome and is identified in contradistinction from—are not other than each other. This paradox is not accidental—that the superman is immanent and at the same time so far out of reach is a consequence of an irreducible absurdity in man himself.

The superman is the mirage of overcoming—the name for the self-overcoming and still-being-to-come without which there is no ‘man’. “Man is something that should be overcome” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 41), an overcoming that is literally *over-man* (another possible translation for *Übermensch*) —the superman is nothing more than the overcoming of man; that's pretty much the extent of description of him in *Zarathustra*. Mere otherness defines him, but then so does sameness. His very name marks his standing-apart from man; as the narrator says to Clark Kent in Jonathan Goldstein's "We are not Supermen": "He may be super, but he's no man!" (Goldstein, *Wiretap*) What he is is what has overcome man, and this alone distinguishes him from man. But because man himself is dependent on the superman for his definition; because man himself is not identified except by this overcoming of himself, it also identifies superman as man. How can this paradox be made sense of? In “Reading *Zarathustra*” Kathleen Higgins comments on the strange nature of Nietzsche’s driving goal : “The overman [*Übermensch*] is a kind of place-holder for the aim of human aspiration towards greatness.” (Higgins, “Reading *Zarathustra*” 143, *my German interpolation*) What we know about the superman, in other words, is that he is that which because it is beyond us we are not. This nullity makes the superman a strange goal, on top of the abiding strangeness of goals as such. The superman is pure goal—a pure 'being that which man strives for'. Such a place-holder goal is not entirely unfamiliar – it has the same kind of structure as art according to Kant—“purposiveness without purpose” (Kant, *Critique of Judgment* 47). But this pure, place-holder kind of goal is strange indeed. Consider how it could come to be, the potentiality or possibility of which would seem to be integral to what it is to be a goal. It is itself an end, not accidentally but necessarily—a goal the fulfilment of which is not its goal, but the process it has solicited (as a goal); namely, overcoming, which Higgins defends by a kind of survey: “*Zarathustra* spends more time discussing the details of this striving than he does explaining what the overman is” (Higgins, *Reading* 143). But it cannot be only an actual thing, since the actuality of a goal is not itself solely actual. It is only by virtue of being a goal that it sets the process in motion and makes it possible as a process. This also recalls Fichte’s theory of the self-positing I: “The self is infinite, but merely in respect to its striving; it strives to be infinite. But the

very concept of striving already involves finitude, for that to which there is no *counterstriving* is not a striving at all. If the self. If the self did more than strive, if it had an infinite causality, it would not be a self: it would not posit itself, and would therefore be nothing.” (Fichte, *Science* 238)

If he is only identified by his otherness, how are we to make sense of the sameness of the superman? Man is superman, as much as man *is* anything at all. Man is his overcoming; because man is he who overcomes himself. Life, which as we have seen is often a synonym of man as much as the class to which he belongs, is “that which must overcome itself again and again” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 138). It is this self-overcoming that Zarathustra praises: “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a down-going.” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 44) Man is not a goal, man is a bridge; he is not a being, but a becoming. He is at the same time that which is overcome and that which overcomes. But because he is his overcoming he is not what he is. As Sartre put it, *réalité humaine*<sup>15</sup> is “being what it is not and not being what it is”<sup>16</sup> (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 33) Like the superman, man is to come. The Superman is man, the *Rede* is the *Vorrede*.

As Derrida points out in *The Ends of Man*, Husserl had no interest in anthropology, philosophical or otherwise. Derrida writes: “It is therefore surprising and very significant that at the same time that the authority of Husserl’s thought was introduced and becoming established in France after the war, and even became a sort of philosophical fashion there, its criticism of anthropologism went completely unnoticed, or in any event was without effect.” (Derrida, “The Ends of Man” 118) And yet, as I have pointed out, it is a human telos of rationality that is presented as the ultimate justification of philosophy and reason, and hence for a critical investigation of them: “Philosophy and science would accordingly be the historical movement through which universal reason, ‘inborn’ in humanity as such, is revealed.” (*Crisis* 15–16) Did Husserl, then, merely give up the steadfast opposition to anthropologism’s relativism of *Logical Investigations*: “It is best to employ the term ‘relativism,’ and to distinguish *individual* from *specific* relativism. The restriction of the latter to the human species stamps it as *anthropologism*.” (LU 78)? While everything about Husserl’s method, and the project in its own right of grounding science absolutely in the essential, non-relative structures of experience—this plea for the importance of science and its absolute, non-relative grounding can’t seem to proceed

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<sup>15</sup> The phrase chosen by Heidegger’s first translator into French, Henry Corbin, to render *Dasein*, ‘*réalité humaine*’ was adopted by Sartre. See Schrift, *Twentieth Century French Philosophy* p. 34 fn

without an anthropocentric motive. The criticism of anthropologism was necessary to oppose the absurdity of explaining essential laws of logic by recourse to contingent facts, and there is no reason to think he abandoned it late in life—indeed, the whole concern of the *Crisis* seems to confirm his earlier concerns. But where does the motivation for epistemic clarity and the avoidance of absurdity and groundlessness issue from? The fate of science is, like Fichte’s striving subject or (more arguably) Nietzsche’s self-overcoming man, tied to a teleology of man. The question, then, is whether the crisis respects this clear-cut distinction between the absolute and essential structure of experience and the anthropologist teleology.

For Husserl, there is more to the human than the wide-openness of overcoming—the essence of reason belonging to humanity is the idea which constitutes humanity in its pursuit of itself. Without the infinite idea the concept of the universal is merely an abstraction after the fact. The finite individual, without the idea, is incommensurable with the infinite totality of humanity. But then the finite individual is itself only an abstraction because the idea is always already assumed, given to experience, and presented in the finitude of the individual itself. The infinite idea in which reason, humanity and universality are all taken together is phenomenologically basic and is the foundation for the claims to universality and reason which are not only necessary for philosophy, but for thought itself. In order to sanction the ‘idea’, Husserl departs from the empirical neutrality of Nietzsche’s conception of life and man, returning to the kind of essentialism for which Nietzsche accused schools such as the Stoics of nihilism. By rejecting parts of life, or even just by holding up in a prescriptive fashion certain parts of life as preferred, life—conceived by Nietzsche as an indivisible whole—is itself denied; “you want to make all existence exist in your own image alone” (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 10). Nietzsche is only able to hold essences in such disdain, however, because he spared himself the burden (even if it seems like he does not at times) of a rigorous determination of those things he strove to keep free of them—life and man. As soon as we enquire into the meaning of the human the idea of reason presents itself as ineluctable condition of possibility for such enquiry.

The evidence of the *telos* of universal human reason is abundant if properly studied and understood according to the structure of the “*Kantian concept of idea*” (Id I xxii), as an idea which infinitely exceeds its presentation in finite consciousness and evidence. The apparent absence of evidence for the *telos* of science just when that *telos* must be brought to

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<sup>16</sup> “étant ce qu’il n’est pas et n’étant pas ce qu’il est” (Sartre, *l’Être et le Néant* lxvii)

bear in crisis only appears as such if the teleological structure of the idea is misunderstood. The infinitude of the idea can never be given in finite appearance except as infinite. It is the idea of what is incommensurable and infinitely exceeds the idea of it. Thus, the non-appearance, a certain inconceivability, of the idea is exactly what is to be expected. The Kantian idea is an essence the content of which cannot be given, cannot be thought—an essence which exceeds its presentation in consciousness—it is in other words an infinite idea, an essence which cannot be delimited, such as for example the idea of infinity itself, which is not only the idea of infinity but infinite in the same way as certain others: “The idea of an infinity motivated in conformity with its essence is not itself an infinity; seeing intellectually that this infinity of necessity cannot be given does not exclude, but rather requires, the intellectually seen givenness of the *idea* of this infinity.” (Id I 343) The idea of infinity allows us to see in the essence of its content, therefore, the way that its content essentially, infinitely outstretches the intuition of it (essentially, the thought which is adequate to its object is not the thought of infinity). As Derrida writes in the *Introduction*—“In the Idea of infinity, there is determined evidence only of the Idea, but not of that of which it is the Idea.” (IOG 139)<sup>17</sup>

It is the idea as it undergirds science and history which would make it possible for critique to be put from a position in which no ‘overwhelming evidence’ of the teleological progression is available, that is to say, to be put from a position in which it is relevant. ‘Overwhelming evidence’ in this context would merely be evidence sufficient to overwhelm the evidence to the contrary—the unreason in evidence that we do not want to be, which in fact cannot be, the idea of science. The Kantian concept of idea is at one point in Derrida’s *Introduction* presented to address a problem of almost the same structure—the asymmetry between the univocity and equivocity in language notwithstanding the necessity of both univocity and equivocity that he established.

Absolute univocity is inaccessible, but only as an Idea in the Kantian sense can be. If the univocity investigated by Husserl and the equivocation generalized by [James] Joyce are in fact relative, they are, therefore, not so symmetrically. For

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<sup>17</sup> The idea of the outstretching of the idea of the infinite by the infinite itself comes through Kant from Descartes’s third meditation, in which the idea of God is defined as the “idea of a being that is supremely perfect and infinite” (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 31). Being infinite, God is not ‘comprehended’ by my idea of God, which is finite as ‘I am finite; “For the nature of the infinite is such that it is not comprehended by a being such as I, who am finite.” (Descartes, *Meditations* 31) Yet it is nonetheless the idea of God, of all ‘my’ ideas “the most true, the most clear and distinct.” (Descartes, *Meditations* 31) The idea of the idea is its transcendentalism—its ability to outstretch its own finitude. The concordance is more noticeable if we keep in mind that what Descartes refers to with the term ‘idea’

their common *telos*, the positive value of univocity, is immediately revealed only within the relativity that Husserl defined.

(IOG 104)

One of these is an idea, the other, though essential, is neither a task, nor infinite.

I will return to the theme of the idea in the course of this thesis. I will examine the necessity that the idea “never phenomenalizes itself” (IOG 137) but must be ‘thought’ and discuss what to make of this difference (if indeed there is a difference between an idea being ‘thought’ and ‘appearing’) and the tension Derrida finds in phenomenology between the “principle of principles” (IOG 138) as one of finitude on the one hand, and “the *Infinitizing* consciousness” (IOG 138) of the idea on the other.

If the idea and its prioritisation overcomes the bad evidence of the present, it does nothing in itself to counter the other barrier to identification of the crisis—which is how to determine a crisis of science scientifically at a time when of necessity science is compromised. The concrete articulation of the coherence of ideality, however, does. The theoretical depth of Husserl’s ideal history and its conditions strives to explain a situation of crisis that is not one of annihilation, wherein the partial and not absolute destitution of the resources of science is rigorously determined. It is in the coherence that the complexity of the Kantian concept of idea is supported and demanded. Having explained the logical structure of critique, I will go on in the rest of this chapter to describe the content of the critique itself—the concealment of the subjective through its substitution by mathematical ideal objectivity.

### ***c. Geometry and idea***

The history of the crisis is the history of science itself—it is not an infection coming from without to plague science, it is “a crisis which developed very early in modern philosophy and science and which extends with increasing intensity to our own day” (Crisis 16). The crisis goes back to science’s own origins and develops with science, first latently and then malignantly, as the corruption of science’s own most fundamental virtues and strengths. By defining the crisis as integral to the development of science, the critique is conceived of as immanent and does not require the imposition of foreign values. On the other hand, by respecting the value of the qualities which are corrupted and in fact the author of their own corruption, and especially the value of the infinite task of reason, the critique demonstrates the possibility of treatment and remedy.

The history of the crisis consists of three stages: the invention of the ideal; the idealisation of nature; and the forgetting of the irreducible activity of the subject and then of science’s purpose as “the One Philosophy” (Crisis 8). It is the last of these three that Husserl begins with and uses to characterise the crisis as a whole and as it is today, as we’ve seen—this is the only stage of science’s history in which science is thoroughly corrupted with respect to the *telos* of mankind; the universal reason that the other historical moments had created and developed. Up until this stage, the qualities which constitute the crisis are at worst ambiguous. The dangers of the other two stages—the first of which, occurring in the darkest depths of antiquity (or even in the pre-historic, depending on how we construe *history*), is the origin of objective science itself (it is even the origin of pure objectivity), and the second of which, a characteristic of the renaissance that Husserl attributes emblematically to Galileo,<sup>18</sup> attempts to facilitate the extension of ideal objectivity, and the *telos* of universal reason that it makes possible, to the world of experience—derive from the same qualities that make them such enormous innovations in the human spirit.

Rather than the first of these stages, the invention of the *idea* and the *ideal*, it is the modern “*transformation* of the idea” (Crisis 21, emphasis mine) which Husserl thematises in the *Crisis*. The preceding invention of ideality is the slippery theme of the *Origin*, but

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<sup>18</sup> “Galileo, the discoverer—or, in order to do justice to his pre-cursors, the consummating discoverer—of physics...” (Crisis 52)



because that text is so overwhelmingly concerned with how an *ideal object*, of which geometry is merely one example, can originate as such, the origin of geometry itself is treated in almost as much detail in the few pages of the *Crisis* that introduce modernity's 'transformation' of it. I will start with this 'invention' as it is presented in the *Crisis*, and I will return to the more thorough and problematising treatment of it in the *Origin* frequently.

The invention of the ideal was itself a transformation within *objectivity*. In the flood planes of the Nile, where Herodotus claims that geometry was born before being inherited by the Greeks, earth measurement was a particularly and, in itself ineluctably, material practice involving the laying out of ropes on the land by 'rope-stretchers' (the Greek term 'ὑποτείνουσα', from which we derive 'hypotenuse', literally means 'stretching under') to survey changes in the field following the year's flood, all for the purpose of taxation. Herodotus describes the creation of this system of land taxation and how it functioned:

This king [the mythical Sesostris associated with the New Kingdom] moreover (so they said) divided the country among all the Egyptians by giving each an equal square parcel of land, and made this his source of revenue, appointing the payment of a yearly tax. And any man who was robbed by the river of a part of his land would come to Sesostris and declare what had befallen him; then the king would send men to look into it and measure the space by which the land was diminished, so that thereafter it should pay in proportion to the tax originally imposed. From this, to my thinking, the Greeks learnt the art of measuring land; the sunclock and the sundial, and the twelve divisions of the day, came to Hellas not from Egypt but from Babylonia.

(Herodotus, *Histories* bk. II ¶109)

This conjecture is supported to some extent by the antiquity of extant artefacts, including a New Kingdom era [c1350 BC] fresco from the tomb of the grain accountant Nebamun in the collection of the British Museum, in which a farmer is depicted ratifying a boundary marker lying amidst the grain of his field. While officials in their chariots look on from the shade of nearby trees he swears "As the great god who is in the sky endures, the boundary-stone is exact." The squares and triangles that we cannot today help but recognise in this practice were then not yet the pure forms determined by geometrical axioms as we know them but shapes that the earth itself took—as though the concept could not then have been abstracted without remaining caked with the mud of the Nile. Although now the meaning of the shape described by the measurement of the rope which had lain upon the land is understood in advance as defined by the pure mathematical terms which express it, before mathematics as such was invented the physical instrument of measurement was mired in the dirt of what it measured. It was that earth that the art

pertained to, as difficult as it may be for us to imagine an inconceivability of the mere withdrawal of its material basis. That purity would be attained only by the ingenuity of an invention.

Before I discuss this invention, however, I would like to discuss in greater depth the activity which precedes it—forgetting for a moment what has already been suggested in a factual and anecdotal manner about what exactly that precedent is (the use and invention of *arts* such as surveying and measurement). While this prehistory is of an event which does not number among the stages of the development of science enumerated in the *Crisis* itself, it is presupposed by them, as the *Origin* informs us, since it is ostensibly concerned with this realm of human activity. Not only is an origin of geometry which precedes the invention of ideal exactness which launches the science itself presupposed, it is to this primordial milieu that Husserl's greatest ambitions are directed in the endeavour to reestablish science in its truth-meaning (*Wahrheitssinnes* [see UG 170/Krisis 377]), and soothe the crisis. Therefore it is crucial to determine the character of this origin with necessity, since the meaningfulness of science today depends on it. It is for this reason that the factual history together with all the ample evidence collected from Herodotus and from retrieved archeological artefacts are essentially insufficient. Because, as I will discuss in the second chapter of this thesis, essences cannot be derived from facts (see Id I 17f), evidence like this must be bracketed and a new science of history with the apodeicticity of ideal sciences must be founded—this is the ambition of Husserl's ideal history.

Such a historical enquiry, which Husserl calls *reactivation*<sup>19</sup> of *urevidence* (*ursprüngliche Evidenz* or *Urevidenz*),<sup>20</sup> is an enquiry into the historical conditions of possibility for the invention of geometry as a meaningful idea. It has the potential to offer crucial insight into certain characteristics of the *lifeworld*—the milieu or horizon in which all subjective experience occurs, taking in all of its conditions and possible characteristics—in which he must have lived in order for such an invention to have been possible. The actual findings of this enquiry are thus rather modest—we can say that

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<sup>19</sup> I will examine the notion of reactivation in the following chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Husserl uses the terms *ursprüngliche Evidenz* (translated by David Carr as 'original self-evidence') and *Urevidenz* (translated as 'primal self-evidence') interchangeably. Due to the lack of any apparent meaningful distinction between these terms and the way they come into use, the unnecessary confusion and inelegance caused by the yet-customary interpolation of the word 'self'; and (most importantly) the need, more rigidly than Husserl has done in his text, to distinguish this kind of evidence from the axiomatic self-evidence arrived at through explication of ideal meaning, I prefer to use the English 'Ur-evidence' to stand for both jointly and without distinguishing between them.

It is now clear that even if we know almost nothing about the historical surrounding world of the first geometers, this much is certain as an invariant, essential structure; that it was a world of 'things'... that all things necessarily had to have a bodily character

(UG 177)

In the "Vienna Lecture" Husserl proposes the same original character, though the historical/free variation method of arriving at it is not treated; "In this way philosophy begins as cosmology; it is first—as it were, obviously—directed in its theoretical interest toward corporeal nature, since, after all, everything given in space-time has in any case, at least at its basis, the existential formula of corporeity." (Crisis 292)

The geometrical idea is not wholly independent of the sensible shapes and the measurements thereof that preceded it—they constitute geometry's 'truth-meaning', 'originary meaning', or 'meaning-fundament'; "a pregeometrical achievement was a meaning-fundament for geometry, a fundament for the great invention of idealization" (Crisis 49). The forgetting of this foundation is the cause of the crisis. It is not immediately obvious exactly what this dependence consists of, or even what it could consist of. It cannot constitute a merely causal dependence, a 'mere' midwife to truth itself, for this meaning remains indispensable to the meaningfulness of geometry, and the loss of it is the beginning of the crisis. No one visits her midwife into adulthood. On the other hand, geometry's ideality is so much of an other world than the empirical one—a different realm of thought—that it is difficult to understand what kind of dependence on a sensible meaning-fundament ideality could have.

Urevidence is the evidence given to experience which originally called for the invention of geometrical ideas, and which historical enquiry knows to have existed because it is such evidence that gives the persisting ideal objects meaning. It is because there was an altar to Apollo that the oracle had ordered doubled that the 'Delian problem' or 'doubling the cube' was meaningful (see Merzbach and Boyer, *A History of Mathematics* 57f), but this is not urevidence, rather, it is the reemergence through applied geometry of ideal objects back into sensible evidence. Urevidence must be presupposed by the invention of geometry as a meaningful domain. The geometrical and ideal object of the line segment and plane, for example, will have been meaningful because they adequately described objects given to experience, that is, originary evidence. It is in order to *mean* something given originally in experience (subjectively) that geometry was invented, and we know this with certainty because it is only such an original meaning-something-given-in-subjective-evidence that can bestow meaning on geometry. Without such a meaning it would be nothing but a baroque and rule-abiding game. That only this kind of evidence can secure

meaning for geometry follows from Husserl's 'principle of all principles'—"the principle of the grounding of all cognition of matters of fact by experience" (Id I 45).

#### ***d. Galileo's 'revealing and concealing genius'***

The geometry inherited by Galileo is by then already “empty of meaning” (Crisis 49), because it does not refer to or represent “the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception” (Crisis 49)—it is a self-contained system of rules without any influence from anything whatever outside. It is, he says a “τέχνη, removed from the sources of truly immediate intuition and originally intuitive thinking, sources from which the so-called geometrical intuition, i.e., that which operates with idealities, has at first derived its meaning.” (Crisis 49) How it derived this meaning is less clear in this text than how the meaning was lost, but when Husserl mentions at this point an “original geometry” (Crisis 49) which may be thought to mean the geometry that originated the discipline, or geometry at the moment of its invention, he may be implying that this original geometry was not yet meaningless. I will return to this ambiguity in the next paragraph. Regardless of how geometry may at one time have been meaningful, it had by the time it was taken up by Galileo long since become an ideal science which neither could nor needed to allow itself to be confirmed or denied by experience—it constituted a system unto itself which could never be a *world* in Husserl’s sense but was capable of that peculiarly systematic kind of completeness:

But it is possible—and this was the discovery which created geometry—using these elementary shapes, singled out in advance as universally available, and according to universal operations which can be carried out with them, to construct not only more and more shapes which, because of the method which produces them, are intersubjectively and univocally determined. For in the end the possibility emerges of producing constructively and univocally, through an *a priori*, all-encompassing systematic method, *all* possibly *conceivable* ideal shapes.

(Crisis 27)

Geometry by Galileo’s time (and probably much earlier) was already in the beginning stage of its crisis—geometry is only meaningful insofar as it transcends its self-completeness; insofar as it is not a game<sup>21</sup> which, while self-consistent and coherent according to the rules it sets out for itself, is devoid of any external significance. Geometry

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<sup>21</sup> Similarly with respect to logic, Klaus Held, in “Husserl’s Phenomenological Method” wrote; “If we detach these laws from situations, then logic becomes a setting up of systems of rules, rules which can no longer be anything more than technical specifications for the setting up of true

must and *does* have meaningful contact with other realms of meaning, specifically the ‘lifeworld’ (*Lebenswelt*) and the empirically intuitable world. It had divested itself of “the true, the only real meaning of these theories, as opposed to the meaning of being a method” (Crisis 53) and remained only that; a ‘method’, a ‘technique’. What remains unclear is how it could ever, on Husserl’s terms, have had such meaning, since it has always been a world apart. Especially in the *Origin*, Husserl explains in detail what such contact entailed, it does not explain how it was possible.

In Galilean physics the exactness geometry had used to determine ideal shapes was brought to the ‘physical world’. Because Galileo and his contemporaries so consistently maintained the *fallacy* of a ready and direct applicability of ideal forms to anything and everything in the world made up of ‘things’ with a “bodily character” (UG 177), which is to say—the whole physical world (a world into which modern science and its expanding disciplines has steadily incorporated everything which, in the materialist thesis that is its more or less consciously espoused philosophical framework,<sup>22</sup> it considers, indeed *can* consider, real) it was a simple matter of approximating the measured and surveyed bodies to “the geometrical ideal shape which functions as a guiding pole” (Crisis 29) to eliminate and “overcome the relativity of subjective interpretations” (Crisis 29). With the help of the ideal, modern physics created the illusion of an empiricist realism independent of the empirical and the perceiving subject, despite the clear contradictoriness of this fallacious fantasy. Because the directly empirically intuited world (and remember there is no indirect intuition in the sense of passing through an ideality that constitutes a ‘mere’ detour) is inexact and requires taking into account the variable of the subject of intuition, the world as described by geometry was imagined to be more real than the world of experience. Thus, modern physics accomplished a bold switcheroo: “the surreptitious substitution of idealised nature for prescientifically intuited nature” (Crisis 49-50). In the concealed idealism of modern science, ideas are not subject to a demand to be confirmed against raw experience or just any experience at all, rather experience must be quantified and redacted so as to either conform to the idea or raise problems for it, otherwise they must be discarded as scientifically meaningless aberrations with purely subjective origins. Of course,

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statements; they would be without any attachment to the content of lived situations in which a person can originally convince herself whether something is true or false.” (Held, *Method* 12)

<sup>22</sup> At least, the philosophical thesis in which it operates, whether explicitly or implicitly. The pervasiveness of a materialist philosophical position plays a significant role notwithstanding the hidden idealism that Husserl’s critique shows underlies science’s materialism.

modern science is the empire of testing and experimentation—but in modern empirical method it is the quantifications and data derived from, or even corroborated by, experiment and not the *experience* itself alone which is necessary for scientific demonstration.

The point here is not that which Thomas Kuhn makes about a science in which a paradigm struggles to incorporate and explain anomalous data, a state of affairs which is a more urgent and internal crisis than Husserl's crisis (Kuhn uses the same vocabulary). Kuhn writes "Though they may begin to lose faith and then to consider alternatives, they do not renounce the paradigm that has led them into crisis... once it has achieved the status of paradigm, a scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place." (Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 77) Kuhn's example pertains to the aberrant state of affairs in which a paradigm backed by quantification struggles against quantification, but of course nowhere in such a confrontation is the right and priority of quantification itself in question. In Kuhn's terms, Husserl's crisis would not register as such, but as a state of good health. In the 'surreptitious substitution' he describes, Husserl is talking about a much more normal (though of course still febrile) state of affairs in which the experience which either cannot be quantified or which goes against the accepted data is not considered. This is because the dependence of the univocal and objective ideas on subjective intuitions is forgotten, leaving geometry meaningless but still, for better or worse, technically powerful, and thus able to conceal the derivative nature of the *a priori* beneath the relentless progress of its own self-reinforcing ideal creations.

The unlikely priority of the mathematico-ideal in scientific objectivism comes about because of science's need not only to posit the material existence of its object but to describe it also. Without this possibility the philosophical objectivism on which it rests would not be able to support it. For science to do its work it is never enough for it to indicate the materialist dogma of the prior existence of physical objects which supervenes against their experience—the conditions for scientific description and explanation must also be established so that the character of that reality might be determined. The *only* scientifically accurate description is quantitative description—the exact description of physical things in terms of their quantitative character. Subjective evidence is considered unreliable in comparison with geometrico-mathematical quantification, rather than as the only possible origin of that objectivity. This is not to say that modern science would not acknowledge, if pressed, an epistemological debt to subjective evidence—any philosophy of science is constrained to acknowledge that experience is in some way necessitated in

order for the descriptive quantification to be acquired—but the materialist metaphysical limitation of its importance to the epistemic is fundamental to science and its objectivism. Because the object is hypostatised, the mathematical description of it is understood to be indeed *of it*—of the object itself. The evidence of the object does not have any metaphysical significance—once it has provided evidence for *mathesis* it can be disposed of, and indeed should be, since in mathematics the unreliable particularities of the evidence can be eliminated. The purified ideal object of applied geometry, to the creation of which experience has played merely a means, is therefore taken to be the description of an object in the metaphysical sense. The existence of the object is independent not only of any experience of it, but even of the possibility of experience of it, which is exactly the meaning of the objectivism Husserl resisted,

It is only with Husserl's motto 'back to the things themselves!' (LU II 168) and its simultaneous critique of materialism and idealism in the position of the object of experience as *what there is* that the fallacy on which scientific objectivism's 'Frankenstein's monster' of idealism and materialism is evident—the supposition of an object independent of experience which the mathematical idea describes is a metaphysical dogma for which there neither is nor can be any evidence. Indeed, it is precisely supposed to be beyond evidence. In maintaining this dogma, objectivism obscures the continued and ineluctable necessity of evidence. In supposing that mathematical ideas describe an object (which is not the object of a subject) itself, objectivism conceals *the things themselves* and the only legitimate role of applied geometry—the determination, with a level of exactitude which is always *approximate*, the objects of consciousness arrived at in subjective evidence. This determination will always be approximate because there is an ineliminable irreducibility of the object in evidence to the mathematical object.

Although it is a detail significant only with respect to the chronology of the genealogy of the crisis, not its general trajectory, it is nevertheless illustrative to clarify the role of *Galileanism*, and of Galileo as “consummating discoverer” (Crisis 52), and to explain exactly how the employment of and reliance on geometry in modern physics constitutes not merely a paradigm shift in Thomas Kuhn's sense but a revolution which sets up the conditions for any ‘revolutions’ which could be called ‘scientific revolutions’ in the way Kuhn means. Without understanding in concrete terms the revolutionary character of science's reliance on mathematics, it is easy to misconstrue its significance. It would then be easy for Husserl's historiographical interpretation to appear very forced. After all,



application of geometry to sensible objects had never ceased to be the basis of its utility since its earliest days, before Thales predicted the 585 BC eclipse, as Husserl himself points out; “geometry had long since become, as ‘applied’ geometry, a means for technology” (Crisis 28). So what, exactly, is new in modern physics’ application of geometry, which is to say reduction of empirical intuition to ideal terms?

Although in applied geometry its ideal forms had been used to describe objects in the empirically intuited world, and the exceeding exactness and rigour of ideas had replaced comparison according to already rigorously standardised, yet sensible units (in the arts of measurement and surveying), it is only with modern physics that the empirical world, conceived for the first time *as* a world and “all-encompassing unity” (Crisis 31), is conceived in advance as subject to geometrical laws and only properly understood as described in geometry. Prior to this the geometrical rendering of an object had to be understood as an abstraction of it which left the object itself within the sensible realm to which it still belonged. In Galileo’s *‘mathesis’* the object itself was understood to be a geometrical object. Perhaps we can conceive the role of applied geometry as the comparison of geometry’s idea with an eidetically reduced sensible object. Even in Platonism a dualistic distinction between the ideal and the real maintains the discreteness of an, albeit subsidiary, empirical world. Any such distinction is eliminated in Galileo’s mathematisation of nature, in which, rather than positing ideality as an originary realm or as a possible descriptive language for nature or the empirical world: “nature itself is idealized under the guidance of the new mathematics; nature itself becomes—to express it in a modern way—a mathematical manifold [Mannigfaltigkeit].” (Crisis 23)

Galileo’s innovation was the Frankenstein’s monster that used a veiled idealism to make materialism seem plausible. His rigorous systematisation of mathematical exactitude and experimentation concealed the underlying theory, cobbled together from the corpses of dead ideologies, that was its foundation. Until Galileo rigorously systematised experiment by making its whole point the acquisition of mathematical description, no materialism could be put forth which was descriptive without being bound in an immediate and obvious way to the experience of the subject. The way that Galileo’s introduction of mathematical idealism fundamentally altered the materialist metaphysical position of Galileo’s natural philosophy (more than the astounding practical and predictive success it made possible) is that it made it possible for the first time in the history of ideas for materialism to ignore the subject and its role in the world. Ironically, the intimate and

pervasive fundamental incorporation of idealism permitted the systematic denial of the ideal. Or at least, to convince itself it could.

What changed with modern physics was the idea of a “universal causal regulation” (Crisis 31) that conjured a world that was “not merely a totality [Allheit] but an all-encompassing unity [Alleinheit], a whole (even though it is infinite)” (Crisis 31). Causality was understood as the unity of relations that constituted the world, prior to and independent of subjective experience; “the specifically determined world-causality, the specifically determined network of causal interdependencies that makes concrete all real events at all times” (Crisis 32), permitting *a priori* determination of the world that exceeded any experience of it by a living subject, because the entirety of the world was conceived in advance as determinable throughout, conforming to a universal ‘*style*’ of ‘bodily character’, being ‘*res extensae*’, which unites the entire world in “*a universal immediate or mediate way of belonging together*” (Crisis 31) by way of a discrete and comprehensible “*universal causal regulation*” (Crisis 31). The causality uniting the world conformed to the ideal forms and laws of geometry, and therefore made possible “a completely new kind of inductive prediction” (Crisis 33) capable of determining with precision and necessity ‘events’ which are beyond experience, even beyond the scope of experience. The rigorous and exact mathematical determination of the world (or at least of regions thereof) permits predictions which further relegate the role of experiment to mere confirmation, and what’s more, further support the metaphysical presupposition of a purely objective world independent of subjective intentionality which the ideality of mathematics is able to determine as if on its own.

In Galileo’s metaphor, nature is the book in which philosophy is written in the language of geometry, ready to be understood by any who speak it;

Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth.

(Galileo, “Assayer” 237-8)

The rhetorical point to which this world-changing claim is in service is the very revolution for which Galileo is so often praised—Galileo is criticising his own major critic Orazio Grassi, writing under the pen-name Lotario Sarsi, for relying on and defending the

important scholastic method of appeals to authority. Philosophy is not a matter of books, titles and authors, but that grand book—

In Sarsi I seem to discern the firm belief that in philosophizing one must support oneself upon the opinion of some celebrated author, as if our minds ought to remain completely sterile and barren unless wedded to the reasoning of some other person. Possibly he thinks that philosophy is a book of fiction by some writer, like the *Iliad* or *Orlando Furioso*, productions in which the least important thing is whether what is written there is true.<sup>23</sup>

(Galileo, “Assayer” 237)

What’s interesting here is that the metaphor of the book and of being a speaker of the language of philosophy seems so much more important than the ‘gaze’ to which it stands open. The masterful rhetoric reveals the importance of the ideal in what has so often been understood as the triumphant birth of scientific empiricism—without the ideal “one wanders about in a dark labyrinth” (Galileo, “Assayer” 238). This evidence shows why Husserl’s critique of Galileo rightly contributes counterpoint to his place in the canon, despite his innovative and fundamental use of mathematics, as the hero of empiricism. In fact, Galileo allows us to forget the empirical. We forget that in science experience is idealised, because in science both the experience (despite its rhetoric) and the ideal (despite its important function) are misunderstood. Thus, Husserl’s defence of the experience which is empiricism’s heart is an attack on modern science as a whole from two unexpected directions—he attacks it for excessive idealism of a specifically mathematical sort in service of a one-sided and metaphysically dogmatic material objectivism. It is an attack that turns the philosophical understanding of science on its ear.

The historical critique of Science lays bare its abandonment of its *telos*—truth—in the pursuit of an objective exactitude—that is; truth’s simulacrum. While objectivity, and even the universal communicability of objectivity that exactitude and univocity of terms is essential to, itself has a place in the *telos* of humanity, science has pursued a course of idealisation that makes a univocal objectivity possible, but at the expense of abandoning the *meaning* of such objects without which they can in no way further the goal of humanity and of *a* humanity. It is the teleo-historical character of the crisis which makes it possible to meaningfully identify a crisis of meaning. Because of the teleological nature of science, its present can be meaningfully criticised on the basis of the idea which it also consists in,

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<sup>23</sup> Husserl, like so many other philosophers who share a sort of disdain for an excessive traditionalism, would no doubt concur. See for example his introduction to the *Cartesian Meditations*,

and because it has disappointed its potential its crisis can be identified *as a crisis* (as opposed to a mere factual change), and the cause of that crisis identified in its history.

The invention of ideality and the mathematisation of nature are the essential philosophical revolutions of science—the conceptual cornerstones of science’s rigour and discipline, as Husserl said (see Crisis 3-4), and of what we so often applaud as its steamrolling progress. Ideality freed inquiry from the comparison of the objects of determination with themselves-indeterminate objects as in the ancient arts of measurement and surveying—bestowing on us instead ideal limits which were fixed absolutely from their inception. It was an unparalleled advancement of the project of universal reason since it greatly diminished the room for equivocation that belonged to our projects of object-study, and opened up the possibility of their communication within a community and preservation for posterity with certainty and clarity hitherto impossible. For the first time, the manipulation of ideas became possible with confidence in the invariability of their ideal identity. The land-surveyor no longer is limited to the fertile mud of the banks of the Nile—no longer confined to the finite and parochial tradition of the culture in which his particular trade and its tools and concepts (which are all the same—that one stretched and sodden rope)—he works with ideas that are universal and true for all land-surveyors in all places. And although he is no longer at the bleeding edge of the science (which nevertheless still takes its name from him), having ceded that to the theoretician and philosopher, he is part of a universal community and fills his own little role in an infinite task of determining with absolute certainty and for all time that shape of things.

Galileo’s mathematisation of nature is more problematic in itself; it is not merely the invention of a new kind of object, but the subordination of one realm of objects under another—the ideal is no longer a technology for the standardisation of objects which were attained in experience, as was the case in applied geometry; in modern physics, experiment is itself reduced to a technique for the discovery of ideal relations and laws constituting the universe as a unity, relations that are supposed to describe reality’s true fabric. Nevertheless, it is only the causally-related unity of nature that makes it possible for Galileo to postulate his law of the constant rate of motion in falling bodies (see Galileo, *The Two New Sciences*), and for the postulation of all such laws as the basis for their inductive generalisation;

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where he almost haughtily proclaims his mission as the pursuit of Descartes’ *modus operandi*, and not of his texts. (see CM 2)

The indirect mathematization of the world, which proceeds as a methodical objectification of the intuitively given world, gives rise to general numerical formulae which, once they are formed, can serve by way of application to accomplish the factual objectification of the particular cases to be subsumed under them.

(Crisis 41)

It is the universality already assumed in advance that validates induction or even makes it conceivable, that “guides all induction of particular causalities” (Crisis 39)—without it, experiment is unique and without its apotheosis to the universal;

From the very beginning, for example, one is not concerned with the free fall of this body; the individual fact is rather an example, embedded from the start in the concrete totality of types belonging to intuitively given nature, in its empirically familiar invariance; and this is naturally carried over into the Galilean attitude of idealizing and mathematizing.

(Crisis 41)

This would be a genuine achievement for the goal of universal human reason were it not for the continued substitution of the ideal for the sensible that it is based on, in which that substitution is ‘surreptitious’, and the sensible almost entirely ignored.

Would it have been possible for Galileo or some other ‘revealing and concealing genius’ (see Crisis 52) to achieve this ordering of the physical world as a whole according to geometrical idealities without what Husserl calls his “fateful omission” (Crisis 49) of the historical enquiry (*Rückfrage*), in which Husserl engaged himself,<sup>24</sup> into the original meaning of geometrical truths for the empirically intuited world? If the particular dependence of a given ideal object on intuition (for its sense and meaning) was in each case made explicit through inquiry into its particular histories, would ideas still function as ideas with their essential universality? And would that in any case suffice for the necessities of causal relations invented in the idealisation of nature of modern physics to have any phenomenological or lifeworldly necessity beyond their cultural significance, in other words—for there to be a physics which is phenomenologically meaningful *with* the necessity essential to physics? Husserl seems to suggest that it would’ve been possible, as he criticises Galileo for that;

It did not enter the mind of a Galileo that it would ever become relevant, indeed of fundamental importance, to geometry, as a branch of a universal knowledge of what is (philosophy), to make geometrical self-evidence—the ‘how’ of its origin—into a problem.

(Crisis 29)

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<sup>24</sup> Husserl says that we are (meaning ‘I am’) “proceeding beyond Galileo in our historical reflections” (Crisis 29)

These are very difficult questions on which hang the fate of Husserl's proposed resolution to the crisis—the enigmatic notion of *reactivation* of original sense-evidence, or *urevidence*.

It is no accident that the same revolution which Husserl blames for having dissimulated the subjective origins of science, which he so effectively criticises by exposing its metaphysical presuppositions, is responsible for modern science as such, with all its breathtaking success. The unparalleled success of Galileo's philosophy cannot be underestimated. Nor can a critique which just explains it away, which does not account for its success and its virtues, hold water. Science is immensely successful notwithstanding its philosophical hollowness—the fact that it stands on a supposed foundation that it cannot, *in principle*, provide. Crucially, it is successful not merely in superficial ways—it is not merely a matter of technological (in the usual, non-Heideggerean sense) and practical progress and invention, but of understanding (again, in a non-Heideggerean sense). With Galileo, in his metaphor of the world as a book written in numbers, for the first time the world is conceived as a totality that is open to systematic rational study—"What is new, unprecedented, is the conceiving of this idea of a rational infinite totality of being with a rational science systematically mastering it. An infinite world, here a world of idealities, is conceived, not as one whose objects become accessible to our knowledge singly, imperfectly, and as it were accidentally, but as one which is attained by a rational, systematically coherent method." (Crisis 22) With the postulation of the world as systematic ideal totality, geometry and the infinite task of reason is born again, as Derrida explains Husserl's discourse (and I will explain the implication of such plural—indeed, infinite—origins in chapter four).

Galilean science is crucial for the development of ideality, which is why Husserl's critique of it is more nuanced than Heidegger's criticism of technology, for example. The same cannot be said for science since the Renaissance, however—the period in which the third stage of the crisis unfolds, which Husserl describes with this heading: "*The positivistic reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science.*" (Crisis 5) For all the scientific and technological progress we have experienced since Galileo's time there has been nothing to push the boundaries of understanding. This may seem like a bold, even myopic, claim in an era which has discovered subatomic particles, pierced the veil of the mechanisms of evolution, and explained the movement of tectonic plates; and witnessed the invention and then overturning of Newtonian physics but all of science's history since Galileo has 'merely' been the exercise of the domain of reason and understanding already invented.

There have been no revolutions, only bloodless coups. But then, Husserl means to start one—a revolution to return the attentions of reason to the subject.

The third ‘stage’ of crisis, then, is merely a disappointment of science’s promise—the forgetting and ignoring of the “specifically human questions” (Crisis 7) which positivism is ill-equipped to treat—though one the way for which had been well prepared by its earlier accomplishments. What has become of the land-surveyor now? He has become Kafka’s land-surveyor; face-to-face with an infinite, obscure and archaic system before he can get to work measuring the land and making its form and dimensions conceivable. It is a system which is immense and can never be taken into view. Its origins are obscure, and anyway they are unfathomable. He is told he has already carried out work when he has not. But it is the system in which he must work—“‘Well, you’re the land surveyor,’ he explained, ‘and you belong at the castle. Where do you want to go?’” (Castle 17)

The prescribed remedy is not just to roll back our culture’s most recent and most egregious mistakes with science—these mistakes have been prepared by a long history that led science down a road that became dangerous long before it became a mistake. It is not enough just to try to back up and start again from where we went most obviously wrong, like Kafka’s land-surveyor, trying to get out of trouble by trying first this course of action then that, constantly testing to see what might work but without ever throwing out the whole project, the whole enterprise which is getting him in such trouble! Husserl’s land-surveyor is not a Kafkan one, and he would have gone on to the next town or even the next country long ago, leaving the castle behind him. I’ll try one more metaphor: science in Husserl’s time had brought humanity out of the woods only to leave it on a dangerous and unstable cliff, and Husserl’s solution is not to take a few steps back into the woods, turn around and try the next path to see if it is still a cliff there—Husserl would guide us back through the forest to the point where we first started heading towards the cliff, and take us a different way entirely. Such a radical response is necessary—the results of trying to reopen science’s eyes to “the *enigma of subjectivity*” (Crisis 5) from within the objectivist paradigm launched by Galileo can be seen in modern and contemporary psychology and related disciplines which not only treats the subject as an object of consciousness, as any discourse or even the most glancing attempt to bring the subject to mind must, but must take subjectivity and ego to belong to the world described by geometry and mathematics, just as much as the banks of the Nile are. Denial may not just be a river in Egypt, but it can be measured the same way! The whole philosophical framework of Galileanism hangs on

this *reducibility*, in the reductive sense, because of its essential monism; “We have not two but only *one* universal form of the world: not two but only *one geometry*” (Crisis 34).

If the solution is a radical recommencement of science, then it is clear that we must go back to before we were committed to the irrationality of Galileo’s disregard for the subjective and his ‘fateful omission’ of historical enquiry, but why is the solution cast in terms of this backwards-looking method (*Rückfrage*) at all? Why do we not just start from scratch, the way scientists and philosophers so often have flattered themselves that they were doing things? The answer takes us back in its own right to the question of the means of diagnosing the crisis to begin with—a crisis which only reveals itself with the clarity of its causes and meanings when examined teleo-historically. This is why the critique must be historical, which is to say teleological. It is only in view of the regulative idea of universal human reason to which science owes its meaning that the sciences can be said in spite of their apparent vitality to be in crisis. On their own terms, since they accept, wittingly or no, the objectivist metaphysics in which they operate, the confrontation with universal reason has no critical hold on them. It is only when reason is reaffirmed that the critique stands and the metaphysics of objectivism appear corrupt. It is when the question of the meaning of truth, a question that brings together the historical and the epistemological, is raised that the emptiness of truth in itself becomes evident. At that point we are already in phenomenology, which is nothing but the pursuit of infinite reason.

Within the limits of their own assumptions the techniques of mathematically rigorous experiment are fantastically successful, but the meaning of science cannot be found in scientific method or even scientific facts themselves—it depends on its place within the idea of humanity. The invention of ideal exactitude in mathematics marked progress within that idea of humanity by the creation of an infinite standard of objectivity, but also introduced a danger in its movement away from experience, the only real basis for knowledge. The idealisation of nature both deepened that progress by making the whole universe understandable according to that same objectivity, and heightened the danger by raising the ideal above the sensible as *more real*, or at least more faithful to reality, and concealing that subversion as well as the original difference between the ideal and the sensible in its “surreptitious substitution” (Crisis 48). The ideal is what must be confirmed in the case of doubt or controversy, while its origin is ignored; “Thus all the occasional (even “philosophical”) reflections which go from technical [scientific] work back to its true meaning always stop at idealised nature” (Crisis 50). Finally, the abandonment by modern science of the Renaissance project of “the One philosophy” (Crisis 8) oriented towards



“‘metaphysical’ questions... (which) surpass the world understood as the universe of mere facts” (Crisis 9), to which Galileo’s ‘consummating’ physics yet remained tethered, tipped the mounting dangers of science’s idealism over into crisis. The current state of the European sciences is the result of their historical development, and it can be identified as crisis because of the teleological idea of human history, which both sets up an idea of progress against which science’s succumbing to its innate dangers can be identified as a crisis and provides the more fundamental framework for conceiving the inaugural and shaping events in and around science as its *history*, and as part of the history of humanity. The critique of science is Husserl’s motivation for engaging in philosophy of history, but it is extraordinary to pay so much attention in the *Crisis* and in the *Origin* to the basis for historical understanding itself. Such a profound inquiry might well have been left aside, the capacity for historical thinking taken for granted. Husserl may not have considered this an option—as Derrida’s contextualisation in his *Introduction* of the *Origin* within the broader concerns of Husserl’s phenomenological project shows, the concern with the basis of historicity reflects the necessity of determining precisely how the historical is presented as historical—for Husserl the account of history and its conditions themselves is inextricable from the account of a particular historical phenomenon. It is the rigours of phenomenology themselves which demand the inquiry into history; it is because of the demands of phenomenological science that we cannot be content with an account of crisis which does not sufficiently establish the possibility of the science of history on which it is based.

There is also a more peculiar suitability in treating the phenomenological critique of science together with the phenomenology of history because as we will see they are not distinct creations, but depend on each other from the outset. History is not a distinct concern from that of science. History is neither possible nor consequential except insofar as it is the history of truth, which is to say the history of science. This is why history, as distinguished from ‘chronicle’, is, like science, for the most part a feature of the Renaissance and the modern era. It is natural that when science comes under scrutiny for Husserl it is together with history, not only because the historicity of science is crucial, but because the transcendental phenomenological method is required by both together. Science and history will be shown to be inseparable; indeed, meaning and even being itself is inseparable from history. As I have already quoted before and will do again, Derrida writes—“historicity is *sense*.” (IOG 150) The distinctiveness of Husserl’s philosophy of history (or one aspect of it) is its refusal to treat history on its own or in the abstract,

because there is no history without science. For this reason, history becomes the target of Husserl's most interesting enquiry; the meaning of ideal history. The means for this enquiry into history will be set forth in the following chapter, concerning ideal history—the historical method of transcendental phenomenology.

## 2 – Philosophical foundations of history

This chapter, titled “Philosophical foundations of history,” will systematically explain the meaning of Husserl’s philosophy of ideal history, ideal history’s necessity, and begin to detail how it works (in addition to giving a necessary interpretation of the meaning of eidetic science and the eidetic reduction, which serves as crucial background). Three sections—“From facts to the meaning of facts,” “The eidetic structure of consciousness,” “Uniting the epistemological and the historical”—comprise this chapter.

The first section explains why history, in particular, must always be eidetic no matter what form it takes or what it is the history of. There is a whole structure of meaning which the historical invariably relies on, which is why all history, even so-called ‘factual history’ is eidetic, and in this section that reliance is explained. First, however, the independence of ideal history from the factual which *is dependent on it*, which Husserl explicitly declares, is spelled out with an example of what it might look like when the two find themselves actually in discord. This independence is important, because it allows history to ignore the factual and concern itself with the kind of history capable of explaining the meaning of our current truths, which will be the major theme of the third section of this chapter; but it is in a way what the whole chapter is leading up to and so it is introduced here (or rather, reintroduced; I wrote about it briefly in the first section of chapter one). Finally, factuality will be let back in from the cold in a consideration of the eidetic meaning of ‘factualness’ for history.

Following this demonstration of the indispensability of the eidetic in the philosophy of history, it is worth taking some time to understand the theory of eidetics as it was already long established to be a key part of phenomenology, which I will do in the section “The eidetic structure of consciousness”. This section is a sustained argument that the intentional structure of consciousness and transcendental phenomenology presuppose that objects of consciousness are essentially, so to speak, essential. This argument counters the anti-transcendental and object-oriented phenomenology of the Göttingen circle and the scientific-methodological interpretation of eidetic reduction of Dagfinn Føllesdal. The section ends with an explanation of how ideality forms the basis of objectivity in all phenomenologically meaningful senses of the word and a detailed explanation of the diversity that is possible on that basis, in order to explain the difference between the

originary truth-meaning of geometry in the psychical realm and geometry's mature ideal objectivity as a difference within the same realm, being ideal objectivity. This diversity comprises ideal objectivity which possesses the 'unrestricted universality' of systems of meaning such as geometry as well as in a qualified and more complicated fashion regions of meaning such as the memories of childhood or the *dramatis personae* of works of literature.

This is where the last section, "Uniting the epistemological and the historical", picks up; re-iterating that eidetic history is necessary because it alone can establish the origin of a science with the certainty necessary to secure that science's meaning, before explaining the most basic methodology of ideal history—imaginary variation. This method of eidetic science is explained in earlier texts by Husserl, but I have taken on the work of explaining how it functions as a historical project. Imaginary variation is the reason the pure essence can be determined and facts dispensed with, and therefore why history can be reunited with science.

### ***a. From facts to the meaning of facts***

Husserl's utter disinterest in historical facts with respect to his inquiry into 'ideal history' is the first thing that will give a new reader pause. "No one would think," he writes, "of tracing the epistemological problem back to such a supposed Thales. This is quite superfluous." (IOG 172) The complete lack of interest in even the most relevant factual historical account to what is still meant to be an inquiry into the history of geometry is nothing short of astounding at first glance. Of course, a philosopher's disdain for the strictly historical and especially of the biographical is nothing new or surprising. Indeed, Hannah Arendt quotes Heidegger as having said with respect to Aristotle; "Regarding the personality of a philosopher, our only interest is that he was born at a certain time, that he worked, and that he died." (Arendt, *Martin Heidegger at 80* 297) Nevertheless, two things make Husserl's unique brand of disdain for the 'historical' far harder to understand. First, there is Husserl's express intent *to do history*, to bring down "The ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation and historical, even humanistic-psychological explanation" (IOG 172), to stop at nothing short of bringing history and the historical back into the heart of philosophy itself. Second, the sort of thing involved in the 'factual history' disdained by Husserl goes well beyond the sort of things excluded by

Heidegger. Not only is 'Thales' birthdate and his real name irrelevant—even his work itself, in itself, is devoid of any philosophical or historical interest. What Husserl calls 'factual history' is not limited to those contextual and biographical aspects which are obviously of only indirect relevance to the matter of the genesis and development of an idea and its own 'internal history'—even the idea itself as it may be supposed by living memory or historical record to have actually appeared and originated is excluded from the scope of a history which is nevertheless supposed to be the most thorough-going, rigorous and profound:

The question of the origin of geometry shall not be considered here as the philological-historical question, i.e., as the search for the first geometers who actually uttered pure geometrical propositions, proofs, theories, or for the particular propositions they discovered, or the like.

(IOG 158)

The factual history of geometry is excluded not only as to biographical content and identifying information, but also the very ideas themselves insofar as their appearance therein is *contingent*, insofar as its necessity within that very history is not demonstrated—that is, the ideas themselves are only significant to the extent they are integrated into the essential history that gives them meaning. The idea in itself is not historically relevant for Husserl—it is only relevant when it is determined with specificity in terms of its necessity within the historical development of the field.

Husserl never really offers examples of this distinction, yet the case of the heliocentric theory may be illustrative. In fact, history rightly (by its own standards) credits Nicolaus Copernicus' early 16<sup>th</sup> century theory that the sun is the centre of the universe, around which all the celestial spheres revolve with the genius of the heliocentric theory. In a perhaps quite rare disagreement, Husserl's history would have to give a somewhat different account, and claim that at the period of Copernicus' pronouncements the heliocentric theory such as it is still had yet to be invented, because the heliocentric theory is an objective truth and at the time of Copernicus' writing it did not exist as such or in that way—if it was something (and surely it was) it was not something that belonged to the history of science, but something which we might take comfort in calling 'true belief'. Though we were not at the time, we have long since been in a position to observe that this theory has the status of objective universality, and that it required the theory of inertia—in fact Galileo Galilei's more or less century later refutation of the Aristotelian laws of motion and with them Ptolemy's arguments against the motion of the earth—to allow it to attain this status of truth. Ideal history is concerned with the heliocentric theory, and with

its dependence on the law of inertia. That factually heliocentrism was postulated some hundred years earlier than the law on which its objectivity depends is inconsequential—ideal history is concerned with the essential genesis of ideal objects, and it is only with Galileo’s ideas that Copernicus’ attain this status. The facts, even when they are the facts of the ideas themselves, are strictly contingent and do not help us understand the *necessity* that belongs to science’s history!<sup>25</sup> As long as it does not confine itself to the ideal necessity of ideas in relation to one-another, it is not the internal history of science.

Through the reduction of factual history, the ideal history crucial to the invention and existence of science is distinguished and liberated from the kind of external and beside-the-point contingent factualities which had dominated not only history’s writing but its philosophy (as for instance in Kant [see IOG 41–42]), as Derrida explains; “factual history must be reduced in order to respect and show the normative independence of the ideal object in its own right; then and only then, by thus avoiding all historicist or logicist confusion, in order to respect and show the unique historicity of the ideal object itself.” (IOG 44) In distinguishing a history internal to science from history which is external (at least to that science—it may be the object of its own science in the same way that the subjectivity excluded from objectivist modern science is made the object of a subsidiary science of psychology), Husserl avoids Kant’s “indifference to empirical history” (IOG 42) and historicism’s dangers simultaneously.

I will have to go into the necessity of the eidetic reduction in Husserl’s phenomenology in greater depth than I did in the preceding chapter and explain the dysfunctional hollowness of so-called ‘factual science’ in some depth, and I will do both of these shortly, but there is a more specific reason, proper to the ideal-historical project itself, that compels Husserl to dismiss factual history and thus leave himself open to the persistent criticism that he ignores history—his critics will say that even his late historical

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<sup>25</sup> Derrida indicates his affinity with this revolutionary and powerful methodology in the first, non-numbered section of his *Introduction* by setting out the logic behind the itinerary of his own study of the *Origin* with attention to its consistency with the rest of Husserl’s oeuvre. His first sentence situates the text, which he calls “this meditation” (IOG 25), within the body of Husserl’s work as “By its date and themes” (IOG 25) belonging to the philosopher’s last project. At the end of this introduction of the *Introduction*, Derrida writes, apparently without irony—“Though this moment of Husserl’s radicalness is ultimate according to the facts, it is perhaps not so de jure.” (IOG 27) ‘*Not so de jure*’, meaning that there is a historical logic of the development of Husserl’s thought which is in some sense independent of the facts—perhaps this is not rigorously determinable in the case of

turn treats history in an ahistorical fashion, that the eidetic reduction eliminates what is most fundamental to history; its contingency.

In *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, Levinas writes “In Husserl, the phenomenon of meaning has never been determined by history.” (Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl* 87) This is the basis for a major distinction between Husserl and Heidegger, about whom Levinas writes in the following paragraph; “For Heidegger, on the contrary, meaning is conditioned by something that already was. The intimate link between meaning and thought results from the accomplishment of meaning in history, that something extra that is one’s existence” (Levinas, *Discovering* 87) Derrida comments on this point specifically in “Violence and Metaphysics” (see VM 87–89), and does a great deal throughout his writing on Husserl, most of which centres on history or related issues, to refute this hasty characterisation.

Derrida also sums this criticism up very clearly and conclusively in *Rogues*: “Whenever a *telos* or teleology comes to orient, order, and make possible a historicity, it annuls that historicity by the same token and neutralizes the unforeseeable and incalculable irruption, the singular and exceptional alterity of *what* [*ce qui*] comes, or indeed of *who* [*qui*] comes, that without which, or the one without whom, nothing happens or arrives.” (Rogues 128)

Probably the most obvious counter to a Husserlean ideal history, however, would be Foucault’s genealogy, committed as it is to the discontinuities of history. Foucault writes: “if [the genealogist] listens to history, he finds that there is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.” (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 78) Husserl, in thinking about history, tries to bring to its depths the same light of recognition of the conditions for experience that inaugurated phenomenology. He would cease to use the obscurity of history as an excuse to resign the experience of the past to darkness and mystery. The critical (in the Kantian sense) rigour of Husserl’s approach (by making the claim about the past responsible to the possibility of our experience of it) avoids some of the excesses of approaches to history that turn their scepticism to a sort of dogmatism by refusing to make their claims of change and discontinuity responsible to the transtemporal objectivity which alone could allow change

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Husserl’s philosophical biography, but the language suggests that it could be where ideal truths were concerned.

to appear. If Husserl's pursuit of origin is exactly of the type Nietzsche, according to Foucault, challenged on the grounds that "this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 78), it is because the reduction of 'accident and succession' is necessary in order for them to appear. Husserl's recognition of the essential 'immobility' is an antidote to the naivety and dogmatism of the thought that the external world can be supposed without first reducing it to essential and thus immobile forms. The genealogy of Foucault and of Nietzsche, then, consists of either claims for which the conditions of their knowledge has not been adequately determined, or the night in which all cows are black, as the old Yiddish saying goes.

While in a certain sense true, Foucault's claim that "What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things." (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 79) is also nonsense. If there really is no identity tying the thing to its origin, then in what sense is that *its* origin? Why is it not the origin of something else entirely? And if it really is the thing's origin, then there must be some sense in which the thing is contiguous. While it is incontrovertible that, as Fichte asserts; "By virtue of its mere notion, the ground falls outside what it grounds" (Fichte, Science 8), the possibility of determining a ground as ground demands the positing of a relation between them which undermines the discreteness of the ground's transcendence. This is the paradox of origin, and I will continue to discuss it throughout this thesis, especially with respect to Derrida's "Signature, Event, Context".

A few pages later, Foucault uses twin examples of the eye and punishment (see Foucault, "Nietzsche" 83), pointing out that neither of them always had the use or value it has now, nor is its current value a 'culmination', which is to say *teleologically determined*. The eye, he says, was not always the contemplative tool, but was honed for hunting and warfare—what a statement! With this *pourquoi* story, he signs onto a whole unexamined system of certainties of evolutionary biology. Foucault would liberate us from the subordination of the past's vicissitudes to the form by which they are now understood, but he would do so only by chaining them to an overarching discourse with its own assumptions of dogmatic metaphysical realism. Surely, the discourse of Darwin is not to be doubted, but how much does this utilitarian and practical story of the eye's origin confine its meaning? Can the eye, when it is understood in those practical terms ever really be freed from them in order to have its contemplative value? With what eye, that of the warrior or of the contemplator, is the practical origin spotted?



Either way—whether the origin is really denied, or the thing the genealogy of which is studied is denied—taken to the extreme that Foucault wants us to, Nietzsche’s dismorphic genealogy would indicate a refusal to take ideas seriously that would fatally undercut his own claims. The language with which Foucault expresses the claim belies its impossibility—in what sense could the thing’s beginning be its beginning if it were not identical? How can a history or genealogy present itself without some kind of essential likeness.

Husserl’s history is not a *Genealogie*, but a *Rückfrage*—at no point does it purport to be a science of the origin, the past and emergence and all the other aspects Foucault mentions except in terms of the appearance of the origin from the present. While Foucault says that “the historical sense [of historians] is mastered by a supra historical perspective” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 87), in fact it is a suprahistorical perspective that his own approach assumes. Despite his own talk about “the surreptitious practices of historians, their pretension to examine things furthest from themselves” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 89) the pretension to examine discontinuity without the aid of an underlying relation can be nothing other than that. There are many kinds of absolutes from which certainty can be acquired, and far from refusing them all, Foucault’s genealogy has its own.

On the other hand, Foucault is attentive to the indispensability and influence of perspective that also undergirds *Rückfrage*. Foucault writes: “The final trait of effective history is its affirmation of knowledge as perspective.” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 90) But it is clearly not enough to acknowledge perspective without also studying what makes it possible for the past to appear to it, as Nietzsche has no interest in doing. Is this a description of the historical reduction, in which the appearance of the concrete historicity has a transcendental sense that is dependent on but also prior to the ideal sense of its continuity?

Ideal history is necessary because the factual is simply ill-equipped to provide the kind of epistemologico-historical foundation that the meaning of geometry needs, or even for the identification of that meaning’s disappearance. Factual history is incapable of overcoming the division between ‘epistemological elucidation’ and ‘historical explanation’ necessary in order for the historical to play the role Husserl wants it to in the establishment of the epistemic grounding of geometrical truth in which it is recognised that the aforementioned separation “between epistemological and genetic origin, is fundamentally mistaken, unless one limits, in the usual way, the concepts of ‘history,’ ‘historical

explanation,' and 'genesis.'" (UG 172-3) 'In the usual way', that is, as fact in thrall to its own contingency. A factual history cannot help to establish the epistemic grounding of truth, and its involvement with the project of grounding has only served to open truth up to the scepticism of a historicism. This is because it can never be enough that science has happened to have had such-and-such a genesis—the epistemologico-historical task requires that it be proved that this genesis was essential, and that it could not have had any other, alternate development or motivation. Moreover, the genesis must connect the science itself to something other than itself, something the meaning of which is not contained in the science—viz. Subjective experience. Only a genesis of this kind can provide meaning. By rejecting the 'ruling dogma' of separation between history and truth in which the essence of history is ignored in deference to its more apparent vagaries and contingency we are able to understand how history makes truth 'at home' rather than inviting scepticism in;

what we know—namely, that the presently vital cultural configuration 'geometry' is a tradition and is still being handed down—is not knowledge concerning an external causality which effects the succession of historical configurations, as if it were knowledge based on induction, the presupposition of which would amount to an absurdity here; rather, to understand geometry or any given cultural fact is to be conscious of its historicity, albeit 'implicitly.'

(UG 173)

This kind of essential history could be derived from the dependence of Copernicus' heliocentric theory as scientific truth on Galileo's laws of motion, just as it never could from the 'accident' that the latter came a century after the former. Truly, Husserl's complete lack of interest in the factually established chronology of events in intellectual history is as revolutionary as it is necessary.

If history is even capable of ignoring contingencies and changes because they cannot at least to this point be made sense of in the teleology of history, then is it still historical? This is the objection to any teleological account of history raised first by Nietzsche and then by Foucault. I will not answer it with any finality at this point, indeed it is one of the most serious questions regarding history and will stay with me until the end, and perhaps beyond (even beyond all ends). This concerns Derrida from the beginning of his studies of Husserl in his '*mémoire*' (dissertation) for his *diplôme d'études supérieures* at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* written when he was 23, published only in 1990 as *Le Problème de la Gènes dans la Philosophie de Husserl*, in which he wrote:

Now, at the moment when Husserl writes that the history presupposed by the passive genesis 'is itself announced,' he has interrupted this dialectic between phenomenology and ontology. Every history announcing itself is reduced *a priori* to its phenomenological and intentional sense, to a sense which it did not

create in its authentic genesis but which preexists it, envelops it, and continually informs it.

(PGH 143)

Leonard Lawlor offers a concise summary of this criticism, that Husserl's whole philosophy subsumes genesis under the essential and structural invariability; "The reduction, therefore for Derrida, cannot capture, within temporal lived experience, the absolute constituting source: genesis." (DH 81) These concerns never abate; even in his last work, in *Rogues*, Derrida is confronting Husserl with the annulling subjection of history in the teleology which makes it possible (see *Rogues* 128). And yet, despite his betrayal of history, it is Husserl's history which Derrida returns to over and over. Why is the history which dooms history so attractive to Derrida?

To aggravate the problem a little further, let us look at the example of the heliocentric hypothesis. If the salient fact is not the strictly factual priority of the discovery of astronomical evidence of heliocentrism but the historico-epistemological priority of the discovery of laws of motion (which would permit the overturning of the Aristotelio-ptolemaic laws of motion that had continued to provide potent arguments against Copernicus' postulates), then why does Husserl insist on talking about history at all? Why does he break down the separation between history and truth, and why is he not content to be as resolutely on the side of ahistorical truth as his critics, Derrida to some extent among them, think he ends up after all? Why is the historico-epistemological priority, which is to say the priority in terms of internal history, not a good old-fashioned logical priority?

Ideal history is prior to and independent of any other form of history, nevertheless it is easiest to understand it insofar as it belongs to historical fact as what makes historical facts *true*. Just as there is no truth or meaning outside of history, a problem I will return to with both Husserl and Derrida, history is meaningless without truth, and the truth for history is the essence of history which comprises a historical fact's "*inner structure of meaning*" (UG 174). Eidetic rigour, and especially the eidetic identity between substance and (eidetic) circumstance, permit ideal history to concern itself not with the contingent history, the particularity of certain facts or data regarding any given "undiscoverable Thales of geometry", but with the "structure of meaning" (UG 174) not only of any such facts but of the possibility of historical factuality in general. The historicity of the idea is indissociable from the idea itself—it is the essential having-been-

created-in-time or having an essence-of-the-first-time (*Erstmaligkeit*)<sup>26</sup> on the basis of essentially prior inventions of ideas and as itself the essential foundation for subsequent ones that belongs to the content (as opposed to mere *context*) of the idea. This is why ideal history is also called ‘internal history’ (*innere Historie*) by Husserl (UG 180/Krisis 386). Ideal history is the “essentially general structure” (UG 174) of any history; it is presupposed by factual history as the structurally temporal removal of its given facts from an always prior present in relation to which they are retrospective, as well as the commerce always at the same time operating across that distance. That is, it is the structure of history which makes it possible to say of a given fact that it is both distant and present—not itself ‘here and now’, but apparent to the ‘here and now’. Every ‘historical fact’ depends on this historical ontology the same way that any simply present fact depends on its own ideality for “its inner structure of meaning” (UG 174), the very position of it within a system (whether assumed or articulated) that makes it capable of being given to consciousness. It is the eidetic which makes it possible for us to be meaningfully related to anything, and below or beyond which we cannot go except by raising what we find there into the ideal and the harsh light of day. Husserl understates the case, writing:

All [merely] factual history remains incomprehensible because, always merely drawing its conclusions naïvely and straightforwardly from facts, it never makes thematic the general ground of meaning on which all such conclusions rest, has never investigated the immense structural *a priori* which is proper to it.

(UG 174)

What he is describing is not a pure factual history but a factual history that treats its theoretical underpinnings naïvely, uncritically and acts as if they were not there. A factual history which neither thematises its facticity nor its historicity is the only actual practice that ‘purely factual history’ could actually denote, however, because there could never be a history which was truly purely factual; it would always have the essential structure of historicity<sup>27</sup>.

Science is the “tradition of truth” and “the most profound and purest history” (IOG 59), as Derrida reckons, because it is the tradition of truth which establishes the continuity which is the condition of possibility for historical meaning in the first place. Any discourse must take shape according to the ideal of truth’s continuity and universal validity

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<sup>26</sup> As Derrida has it, following Fink (see IOG 48fn)

<sup>27</sup> “If the usual factual study of history in general, and in particular the history which in most recent times has achieved true universal extension over all humanity, is to have any meaning at all, such a meaning can only be grounded upon what we here call internal history, and as such upon the foundations of the universal historical *a priori*.” (UG 180)

as Derrida again points out; “Indeed, without this [the ‘continuity established by ‘the tradition of truth’ or ‘the pure unity of such a tradition’s sense’] no authentic history would be thought or projected as such; there would only be an empirical aggregate of finite and accidental units.” (IOG 59)<sup>28</sup>

The ideal is the foundation of meaning for any kind of historical imagination or science (whether of pure ideas themselves or of facts). Husserl offers examples of the necessity of the eidetic early on in *Ideas I* in his description of the relationship between factual and eidetic sciences: “it is without question that an experiential science... must proceed according to the formal principles treated by formal logic... [and since it is ‘directed to objects’] must be universally bound by the laws that belong to the essence of anything objective whatever” (Id I 17–18). It is only because of the essential structure of meaning that the facts treated by ‘experiential’ or factual sciences are scientifically or even meaningfully related or even understandable as ‘facts’ and the basis of experience; there is thus no purely factual science or pure empiricism<sup>29</sup>. Without the *a priori* of history would not even be “a heap of broken images, where the sun beats” (Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 22).

As Husserl writes, again in *Ideas I*; “There is no science of matters of fact which, were it fully developed as a science, could be pure of eidetic cognitions and therefore could be independent of the formal or the material eidetic sciences.” (Id I 17) It is no different in the case of the science of history—anything meaningfully intended as having played a part in history must already possess an eidetic structure according to which it is able to be identified above all else as an event or occurrence and as having occurred prior—and it is essential to a rigorous science to articulate and examine this structure and how it is that it maintains the historical event both in relation to a present and yet at a distance from that present. This is the essential structure of all historical science, but for a purely phenomenological science of history, or to accomplish the historical task of an enquiry (*Rückfrage*) that would reestablish the foundation of meaningfulness of the ideal science of geometry, or even just identify the loss of meaning that calls for it, a more demanding ideal

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<sup>28</sup> I would heap up on this claim by noting that even ‘accidental units’ are never apparent without a system which makes sense of them *as* accidental.

<sup>29</sup> This position draws from Hegel’s refutation of the naive certainty of the senses in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as always ‘mediated’ (See Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* 59), although for Husserl the picture is already complicated by the idea in a way that it is not yet for Hegel at that stage.

history is necessary, a purely eidetic history independent of facts. Before looking into this history and its method, I will discuss what is meant by ‘facts’ and by ‘ideas’.

It is helpful to return again to *Ideas I* to explain what is meant by facts and factuality, and to understand the meaning of the fundamental division in historical science between the kind of ‘philological-historical’ questions that are extrinsic to the history of the meaning of ideas (or of certain ideas), and the ‘internal history’ which alone can account for them. It is all the more crucial because, as we saw, the substance treated by the two types of history need not be different. We must be clear about how it is that the treatment of ideas as ‘facts’ is insufficient in the way that the treatment of ideas essentially—in other words, as ideas—is not.<sup>30</sup>

‘Factualness’ (*Tatsächlichkeit*), as Husserl calls it in *Ideas I*, is what contributes the *contingency* that distinguishes individuals. It is that by virtue of which an individual existence is such as it is; “Individual existence of every sort is, quite universally speaking, ‘*contingent*’ . It is thus; in respect of its essence it could be otherwise.” (Id I 7) Facts, then, do not concern distinct entities, nor even distinct qualities—the individual is always at the same time factual and related to its essence, and the extent to which it is considered factually marks nothing more than the limit of eidetic enquiry into it reached by us. The individual existence is never, inasmuch as it can be made sense of at all, purely factual;

the sense of this contingency, which is called factualness, is limited in that it is correlative to a *necessity* which does not signify the mere *de facto* existence of an obtaining rule of coordination among spatiotemporal matters of fact but rather has the character of *eidetic necessity* and with this a relation to *eidetic universality*.

(Id I 7)

This follows from phenomenology itself as an eidetic science, and the eidetic structure of objectivity, thus of consciousness, but it is easy to mistake since the ‘ideal’ which describes everything that appears, including the factual (Husserl’s distinction in the introduction to *Ideas I* notwithstanding) also refers, as in the case of mathematics, to peculiarly identically exact types of ideas. The basic structure of objects of consciousness is ideal, and therefore the factual is not a different ‘type’, an entirely different order of

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<sup>30</sup> The significance of this distinction is that ideas can be rendered insignificant when they are treated as facts, rather than in themselves. This can be seen again in the example of the heliocentric postulate.

being, but a type *of* idea—the idea of factualness.<sup>31</sup> I will go into the meaning of the distinctness of certain exact types of ideas that are distinguished as ‘ideas proper’ or ‘ideal objects’, but these are not different entirely, merely free from various sorts of modification. We must understand ‘ideas proper’ as ideas which do not require bringing in other ideas, such as the idea of factualness and the particular determination of that factualness, but which stand alone.

Factual science, then, does not pertain to pure facts, but neither is it concerned exclusively with what can already at the moment of the experience of it be reduced to a unique *eidos* independent of its particular but contingent associated context. Factual sciences include *experiential sciences*,<sup>32</sup> the kind of sciences which concern “founding cognitional acts of experiencing [that] posit something real individually” (Id I 7), as opposed to the eidetic sciences of mathematics and logic and the kind of eidetic science of phenomena proposed by Husserl in which the subject performs a kind of ‘eidetic seeing’ or imaginary presentation, a “seeing which is *presentive* of the essence” (Id I 8) in order to determine *what* the thing *is* apart from its contingent experiential context. Factual sciences concern individuals, but not as objects or things already entirely reduced to their *eidos*; they concern experiences in which the things that constitute them are not yet separated from their contingent actuality and in which individuals do not appear as they exist in themselves at any point but only insofar as they are experienced in a particular setting. Seized in its factuality;

it [the thing in experience] is posited as something that is at this place, in this physical shape (or else is given in union with something organismal having this shape), whereas the same real something considered with respect to its own essence could just as well be at any other place and have any other shape

(Id I 7)

In a factual individual, its context (which when we get down to it is also a web of ideas) is inextricable from its *eidos*.

What I am trying to stress here is that there is a phenomenological sense to a factual science, distinct from the metaphysical presuppositions naively and unintentionally subscribed to by a science which purports to deal in ‘facts’. Certainly even a factual science, adequately understood, is eidetic. There can be no such thing as a *purely* factual science—a

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<sup>31</sup> The distinction Husserl makes in the introduction to *Ideas I* is not opposed to this, except insofar as I have rejected the terminological exclusion of ‘idea’ from “the universal concept of (either formal or material) essence” (ID I xxii). Whatever term is preferred, the fact is that the exact idea is a kind of idea, and belongs to ideality in general.

<sup>32</sup> “Experiential sciences are *sciences of* ‘matters of fact.’” (Id I 7)

purely factual science would be one that ignores the eidetic foundations of its meaning, which any non-phenomenological science does to the extent that it does not suspend the judgments upon which it bases itself. The positivistic sciences dissimulate their eidetic foundations by claiming a naive materialism—the essentially unverifiable metaphysical assumption that facts concern objects existing absolutely independent of intention<sup>33</sup>. A fact, then, would have its basis, the foundation for its truth, in a real object or real objects, and the factual sciences would derive their rigour from their true representation of objects in nature. A fine system, except that it is based on the essentially unverifiable, which is to say on faith.<sup>34</sup> Having rid itself of the presupposition of a pure objectivity assumed by the natural sciences, the basis for what Bernet, Kern, and Marbach call (phenomenological) science’s “intersubjectively verifiable, objectively valid” (IHP 77) aspirations must be more rigorously established through a presuppositionless science of essences. It is as an essence among essences, rather than a reference to a piece of matter and state of affairs that facts exist and can be true.

A factual history is one that treats the entities it considers, regardless of whether they are biographical or historico-contextual facts or even ideas themselves,<sup>35</sup> not as isolated in their unique essences and abstracted from their experiential (in this case, historical and evidential) context, but as irreducibly contingent. This non-internal history, itself based on internal history, concerns the historical existence of a truth insofar as it is tied up with all kinds of other historical facts, more or less irrelevant to its essential content, and as long as the existence and coming to be of truth is explained in this way its internal history, the way in which it depends not on historico-biographical factors or other factors external to the truth of that truth itself, but on the science and reason that preceded it and made it possible, and the way in which it is itself necessitated by truths invented later on. All this remains concealed, and it remains impossible to establish truths and the essential history of which they consist as the way of being and development of

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<sup>33</sup> Ideas, which are also objective, are themselves independent of any intention, but without the added materialist hypostatisation which presumes that its objects are independent of even the *possibility* of intention.

<sup>34</sup> As Derrida will help show, what seems the same can be said of phenomenology, which relies on the idea, the form of which itself (he claims) never appears. The damning symmetry is only apparent however, since in phenomenology the apodeictic guarantee is not meant to be the idea by which the experience is explained, but the experience itself. The idea (in the Kantian sense) and the whole eidetic reduction is merely a theory to explain the existence of what is in itself absolutely certain—the appearance of what appears. In empirical science, so-called, on the other hand, the evidence is only ever meant to be a guide for the existence of an object. In the latter case, much more, infinitely more, is expected from what is ultimately a matter of faith.

<sup>35</sup> Derrida mentions “the particular propositions they discovered” (IOG 158)



truth, at once epistemic and historical. The ideal history Husserl proposes seeks to free history from this contingency and to invent a historical project in which the eidetic interrelations between essences are considered irrespective of their factual context. To many, this does not look like a history at all, but I hope to make its strengths apparent, or at least to explain why a history of the usual kind cannot do the work Husserl requires of a history. In order to make this clear, I will go into some more detail with respect to essences, their sense in phenomenology, and phenomenology as an eidetic science.

### ***b. The eidetic structure of consciousness***

The beginnings of eidetic science already belong to the very intentional structure of consciousness that is fundamental to phenomenology from the beginning (logically and chronologically). In the structure of intuition, the intuited object is already distinct though not independent from the intuiting act; the two aspects of intuition are, as Husserl puts it; “essentially interrelated but, as a matter of essential necessity, are not really inherently and essentially one and combined.” (Id I 86) This distinction is the fundamental premise which Husserl inherited from his teacher Franz Brentano—that consciousness is always ‘of’ something. The object of consciousness is constituted by the transcendental subject *as* an object that transcends the consciousness apprehending it as such. Husserl’s distinction between ‘transcendental’ and ‘transcendent’ is strange until we understand that consciousness is transcendental because it is of objects that are transcendent—they are complimentary aspects of the phenomenal world. Crucial to its function, the eidetic structure of consciousness is at the foundation of phenomenology.

Husserl’s transcendental turn is his turn from the things themselves to the investigation of their origins; the way that the transcendent object is constituted as an object in consciousness. The perceptions that make up the flow of consciousness are combined with apperceptions, the interpolations of what is not ‘actually’ perceived but suggested according to the ideal meanings of the direct perceptions themselves, to complete the objectivity and unity of what is only ever adumbrated (perceived in part, insufficient to its objective form) and in flux for perception. Husserl’s demonstration of this ineluctable egoic constitution, and the vast difference between ‘pure perception’ and the synthesization of conscious experience in §41 is brilliantly clear;

I open my eyes; and I have the perception again. The perception? Let us be more precise. Returning, it is not, under any circumstances, individually the same. Only the table is the same, intended to as the same in the synthetical consciousness which connects the new perception with the memory.

(Id I 86)

It is because consciousness is attending to the essence of the table that it is immediately taken for ‘the same’ despite the interruption of direct experience of it. The table is the same, even though the perception is different. As a result, we have no choice but to call this ‘objectivity’.

Essences concern those aspects of perceptions which do not belong to them alone as a unique and non-duplicable ‘element’ of flux—it is not an individual moment’s absolutely unique essence which eidetic science is concerned with, but the essential characteristics and aspects which are at least in principle shared by many like and (in other respects) unlike individuals (in fact, this is an imprecise way of speaking, for everything which can be denoted as individual already surpasses its own individuality because it already has the properties of objectivity which abstract it from pure flux). But these are not inductive distillations of numerous intuitions a posteriori; the essence already belongs to the object in its constitution by the ego. Even though the table synthesised by consciousness before and after Husserl closes his eyes is an individual table synthesised as having individual inextricable characteristics (themselves also essential and capable of being partaken of by many other objects) such as for example its dark colour, its being sunlit by an adjacent window or having on it papers and a writing instrument, all of which belong to it as ‘this table here’<sup>36</sup> (including those characteristics of it which do not belong to it as a table but belong to its context within a world) but are entirely irrelevant to its essence as a table. And yet, the synthesising consciousness does not merely constitute the table as an object on the basis of its individual and distinct character, it also does so on the basis of the essences of which it partakes—that it is a table, that it has a flat surface, that it is sunlit—and which belong to the constituting ego prior to the perception of it. The eidetic work of experience and the synthesis of apperceptions are contemporaneous though separable parts of consciousness, and in experience we continuously switch back and forth between ‘this table here’ and ‘that this here is a table’. Each is presupposed by the other. When Husserl says that all phenomenology is eidetic, this is what he means.<sup>37</sup>

Essences are the basis of objectivity in both the sense of the existence of constituted objects as well as in the sense of being available to everyone in like form. By the grace of essences the transcendental subject is liberated from “an eternal Heraclitean flux” (Bernet, Kern and Marbach, *Introduction* 77) in which what cannot even be described in such stable terms as ‘perceptions’ appear and then vanish again without any constancy or

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<sup>36</sup> I am describing the table in a late photograph of Husserl in his office in which he is seated at it, a wall of books behind him, lit by a large window to his left. He is looking intently at a small piece of paper in his left hand.

<sup>37</sup> I have kept my discussion of intuition brief, in part because it has been discussed so thoroughly by scholars. See Held; Bernet, Kern, and Marbach; Lewis and Staehler. My purpose in discussing it here briefly has been to indicate the synthetic nature of consciousness, in order to explain the role of essences within consciousness itself.

definition.<sup>38</sup> And it is on the basis of an already eidetic consciousness that phenomenological science is able to be intended by consciousness—transcendent and thus objective. As David Carr explains, the eidetic object or ‘what is meant’ in consciousness is inherently universal and separate from the subject’s meaning of it; “Transcendence is conceived as the nonreducibility of what is meant to the particular act or acts in which it is meant” (Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* 87) by being meant as “always being the reference point of other possible acts implied in any actual one.” (Carr, *Problem* 87) In eidetic consciousness the meant object is separate from the fact of its being meant, from the intending subject, and from the fleeting act of intention. It is because it is transcendent that the object is an object, both in the minimal sense of being an object of consciousness and in the great sense of being, first; intersubjectively available, and second; true for everyone, which Carr expresses in the context of his explanation of the peculiar aspect of the problem of solipsism Husserl undertakes to explain in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*;

In a sense the possibility of different egos has already been taken into account by the very eidetic approach of phenomenology. By taking the particular objects of transcendental reflection as merely exemplary, Husserl seeks to describe the structure of any consciousness at all.

(Carr, *Problem* 87)

This recalls the distinction made by Dorion Cairns between Husserl’s use of the words *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*, which Carr disagrees with (see third section in the preceding chapter). I concur with Carr for the most part, as I mentioned in the preceding chapter, and although a distinction between the two might be illustrative, with *Gegenstand* used to refer to the ‘minimal sense’, while *Objekt* could be used for the more precise sense, what their shared condition of possibility shows is actually a continuity—one that I will explain fully in chapter three. Being capable of being thought and being true for all are both made possible in the same way. Not only that—to be an object of consciousness is to be an objective truth, so long as it is considered appropriately with the necessary conditions and not precipitately universalised.

Reduced to their *eidos*, the objects of consciousness are objective, though not necessarily freed from their factual dependence on a particular factual subject and her factual time and place. This transcendental objectivation is a matter of degree in that the object is only ‘free’ to the extent that it is treated with respect to its essence. So, a psychic

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<sup>38</sup> “The perception itself, however, is what it is in the continuous flux of consciousness and is itself a continuous flux” (Id I 87)

object that is not purely ideal—a childhood memory for example—can be made ideal by being expressed in language and put in context—such expression liberates the object of my memory from its purely intrasubjective origin and presents it as an ideal and objective pertinence to the world and the things in it (in which and about which my memory is presented as being of) as well as liberating the object that is my memory itself and presenting it for the first time as an intersubjectively shared object—an idea or essence. The entire recollection remains bound to my individual psychic factuality; not only is the existence of the whole memory essentially limited to that region, with its objectively determinable privacy (see fifth *Cartesian Meditation*), but the object of the memory itself exists only in that recollection as a transcendental object. This means that it is not merely a subjective perspective on a universally available object, but tied to a subjectivity from beginning to end. Nevertheless, subjectivity for it is a *mode* of ideal objectivity, which is its fundamental ontological state. The factual and the psychical are modifications of essential objectivity, which anything possesses from the start by dint of being always capable of being communicated and verified intersubjectively (to a degree limited by the absence of obstacles, the privacy of the psychical, etc.). The partially psychical (partially bound to my individual subjective psyche) objectivity of my memory is eidetic insofar as, being a memory, it is an object of consciousness, but the recollection itself is nevertheless not *objective* in the strong sense because the object of consciousness is, in its essence, dependent on the consciousness in which it is held, bound to it as that which objectifies it and thus in which it exists. It is only objective in the full, intersubjective, sense when the consciousness itself—the memory—is itself made objective in language and communicated to others *as* dependent on my particular psychical context. It can be verified and made objective by my communication of it—when I say something like “...but then the memory, not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived, and might now very possibly be, would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being, from which I could never have escaped by myself” (Proust, *Swann’s Way* 12). In that sense, though objective, it is not *free*, and it is not the type of object which stands on its own independently of any other objects. The memory itself is an idea and an object, but one whose validity is bound to my individual subjectivity. The meaning and truth of the above sentence depends on the fictional context of Marcel, and the literary context of *Swann’s Way*, the *eide* or essences of those contexts are inextricable from its meaning and must remain connected to it, implicitly or explicitly, at all times in order for it to stay meaningful. This is how it diverges from the kind of ‘pure’ ideal objectivity which can

belong to things like geometrical postulates alone—these require no contingent context but are meaningful whenever the system of geometry to which they belong essentially is meaningful. The divergence is a difference between things which are all nevertheless ideal objects—yet it is the origin of geometry. It is a difference without a difference—it is important not to confuse the difference that inaugurates ideal objectivity with the difference between the objective and something not objective, or even something that is not objective in the ‘full’ sense. Which is to say, the origin of objectivity is not in the difference Cairns indicates between *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*.<sup>39</sup> In the rest of this section, I will explain the differences that can be between ideal objects, and how the geometry originates as a different kind of idea not through modification or supplementation, but through an elimination of contextual meaning made possible by the universality and exactitude of those ideas.

Objectivity in the fullest sense belongs as a matter of course to ideal objects, and while it only belongs to the kind of psychic object which Husserl maintains the ideal had originated from (must have originated from, since it had to have been invented by a living subject; “This process of projecting and successfully realizing [that is, grasping the truth of the geometrical idea] occurs, after all, purely within the subject of the inventor” [UG 160]) in a qualified way, it nevertheless belongs to them, as it does to any kind of object which nevertheless must be ‘qualified’ by the stipulation of a ‘region’ of existence. Only ideal objects *tout court* can be objects in the sense of being intersubjectively available without qualification, but any object at all, qualified appropriately and in the absence of any impediments is objective in this way. This is why the difference between the geometrical object and its intrasubjective origin is a difference without a difference, not a categorial one or an ontological one. The function of ‘qualification’ is appropriate because it suggests the superaddition of something like an impediment rather than a deficiency in the fundamental objectivity that belongs to it as a transcendent object. An object of this type is one that is bound or hobbled. Easy intersubjective availability constitutes the object’s ‘freedom’ from an individual psyche in which the psychic object, for example, in its own essence, is ‘bound’ (to borrow and transpose, with Derrida, Husserl’s terminology from *Experience and Judgment*). While the object’s deliverance occurs in language and requires its incarnation in a “linguistic living body” (UG 161) or in “linguistic flesh” (IOG 76), which Derrida makes a

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<sup>39</sup> In fact, in the *Origin*, the usage, if it signified anything, would have to signify the contrary of what Cairns claims it does. on *Krisis* 370 (UG 163), *Gegenständlichkeit* is used to refer to geometrical

big deal of, it is not this manifestation which is responsible for the difference—that would be too much of a difference. The possibility of incarnation in a “linguistic body” (*Sprachleib*) belongs to every object as such. Freedom is spontaneous, and a triumph of the meaning of the object itself and its “‘unconditional’ universal validity” (Id I 15).

Freedom for an idea is the ‘unrestricted (or, ‘unconditional’) universal validity of its *eidos*’ (See Id I 15)—the complete independence of the truth of its *eidos* from any contingent context. This particular exceptional quality is not ultimately a consequence of its linguistic embodiment, which must belong to any idea or object whatsoever, but a spontaneous act of freedom. There is no cause of the freedom of the idea from the eidetic context of the subject’s internal life beyond the freedom itself—nothing, that is, which is added to the psychical object in order to liberate it. It is in the object’s self-emancipation that it comes to *exist* in the linguistic form it may already have inhabited (like a shell). Specifically and emphatically; the putting of the psychic object into words does not suffice for its eidetic content to be freed from the psychical and made ideal in the pure sense, even though in places Husserl himself almost seems to give language this role. This is the way he answers the question that orients the enquiry into origins:

how does geometrical ideality (like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul, to its ideal objectivity? In advance we see that occurs by means of language, through which it receives, so to speak, its linguistic living body [*Sprachleib*].

(UG 161)

Despite appearances, this cannot be interpreted to mean that it is the sudden and novel introduction of language, or rather of the object into language, that makes for ideal objectivity of the particular kind that geometrical ideality is. In the following pages of Husserl’s text, the role of language in the constitution of the objective is consistently described as the faculty, or one of the faculties, which makes this kind of object possible, and indeed it is. But only because it makes *all* objects possible. The language Husserl uses here frequently makes it sound like he is laying out a stage-based theory, and yet this is impossible because the seeming new acquisitions are indispensable to the ‘stage’ which might have come before. In chapter three I will recharacterise Husserl’s account as one of a cohort of mutually interdependent characteristics which makes eidetic science, and ideal objectivity specifically possible, notwithstanding certain expressions of Husserl which indicate, on the contrary, a stage theory.

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objects, which are necessarily objective in the strongest possible sense.

It is always possible for the object of psychical intention to be represented in language, without thus itself being freed from its psychical home and coming to exist in language in a universal sense, as when an individual uses language to pick out and represent an object belonging to his psyche; “To be sure, something psychic which can be understood by others [*nachverstehbar*] and is communicable, as something psychic belonging to this man, is *eo ipso* objective, just as he himself, as concrete man, is experienceable and namable by everyone as a real thing in the world of things in general.” (UG 162–63)

Therefore, a stage-based interpretation of the origin of geometry would come at too great a cost for our understanding of the inexact sciences, the intentional and transcendental structure and functioning of consciousness and language itself. No kind of object, or any kind of ‘thing’ at all, is possible without the possibility of being expressed in language, and becoming involved with all the other possibilities which belong to the eidetic, a confluence of possibilities and teleologies which connect the object of consciousness to the absolutely objective object incontrovertibly. To make the particularly exact kind of ideality of geometrical objects, that kind which are distinguished as ideas in the Kantian sense, the only things capable of being put in language would be ludicrous, and there is not much indication that Husserl thinks this is the case. Quite the opposite is true—linguistic embodiment belongs already as a pure possibility, which as I will explain in the following chapter is the only relevant way of being of ideal qualities, to every object of consciousness whatsoever.

But in such case, the psychic domain of the object is ineliminable from its essence as its way of being; there belongs to the object an essential qualification or modification—I will shortly explain how the liberation of the object is accomplished merely through the elimination of all essential modification, which the object is capable of if it possesses an essence to which belongs the possibility of being so stripped of modification. The example of a childhood memory shows how an object can exist as psychical, and yet be able to be put in language, and thus also eidetically reduced, without losing its existential dwelling within the subjectivity in which it originated. In such a case, the consciousness of the remembered object, in the form of a memory, is itself objectified and can be expressed in language—but the essence of that object (the entire recollection) is presented as belonging to its psychical existence within myself and thus is not simply objective in the sense of being available in the same way to everyone without qualification, even though it can be given in language to everyone, because it must be given in language *as mine* in order to make sense. It is in terms of this that we must understand the distinction Husserl makes between



psychical and ideal objects. When Husserl puts his organising question in terms which appear to make a rigid distinction between types of objects explicit—

But how does the intrapsychically constituted structure arrive at an intersubjective being [*eigenen intersubjektiven Sein* (Krisis 370)] of its own as an ideal object [*ideale Gegenständlichkeit* (Krisis 370)] which, as 'geometrical,' is anything but a real psychic object, even though it has arisen psychically?

(UG 163)

—it is not because ideal objects and real psychic objects are entirely different ways of being of things. The distinction is asymmetrical—an ideal object is “anything but a real psychic object” but the converse does not follow—psychic objects are ideal objects. An ideal object is anything but psychic because it has liberated itself from the bounds of the psychic domain through its exactness and universality, not because it is a different kind all together. Only such objects as can become fully ideal because they possess the possibility of being held in common by all members of the given community, that is, eidetically universal objects, can free themselves spontaneously of the necessity of being related to a subject’s interior psychic activity or other such determining context in order to be understood. Only under these conditions can they become full and independent ideal objects. To both kinds of objects belongs the possibility of expression in language which constitutes them as objects (or, without which they could not be objects), but it is the objective content which constitutes the difference between a psychic object whose form is essentially related to its objectifying subject, and the ideal object which is universal. The difference cannot be one between different ‘types’ of objectivity in the sense of ways of existing of objects, but concerns their different objective sense.<sup>40</sup> The eidetic reduction from which all phenomenological inquiry proceeds makes this clear—that the limitation of the psychic object is a special case of what is, as an object, *essentially* essential.<sup>41</sup> Phenomenology must separate the fundamental constituting role of language from the innate characteristics of ideal objects which are objective in an unqualified way, and I will devote the remainder of

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<sup>40</sup> In UG 160-61 Husserl seems to distinguish ideal objects from other types of objects as independent of their sensible embodiment and ‘spatiotemporal individuation’; distinguishing ideal objects from other cultural products he writes: “It is proper to a whole class of spiritual products within the cultural world, to which not only all scientific constructions and the sciences themselves belong but also, for example, the constructions of fine literature. Works of this class do not, like tools (hammers, pliers) or like architectural and other such products, have a repeatability in many like exemplars.” (UG 160) The ‘freedom’ of ideal objects from spatiotemporal instantiation and its repetition actually show that sensible (and also psychical) objects are special cases of ideal objectivity, as I will explain shortly.

<sup>41</sup> Thus, Husserl explains that ideal objects in the ‘pure’ sense are “quite different ones from those coming under the concept of language” (UG 161), even though they are both ideal objects.

this section to explaining this difference, as I will devote the entire third chapter to studying the role that language and the other essential characteristics of ideality play.

The taste of madeleine dipped in “real or lime-flower tea” (Proust, *Way* 58), and the childhood Sunday morning tableau in which Marcel’s Aunt Léonie gives him the “little crumb” (Proust, *Way* 58), the objects of the memory of *In Search of Lost Time*’s narrator, are both objective (let us suppose for the moment that they are not both fictionalised; let us forgive the gulf separating a petit madeleine and a bit of stale toast, separating *Combray* and Illiers [now renamed Illiers-Combray, narrowing the gulf somewhat] or whatever other variances and inventions have interceded, even if they extend to the entire episode)—the taste could in principle have been enjoyed by anyone at all, and the quaint Sunday morning was not only in fact (or rather, in fiction) experienced by Aunt Léonie in addition to Marcel, but essentially could have been experienced by anyone at all, say by M. Swann, who though he may not have been invited to Léonie’s room and would not have called at that time, nevertheless would if for some reason he had payed such a remarkable visit have been able to hear Marcel enter his great Aunt’s room and to know the two of them to be there together and in such a way experienced the same scene. It matters not, of course, that he did not, only that in principle he or anyone else could have—as objects the little crumb of madeleine and the tea, whatever type it was on that particular occasion, was available to anyone whose perspective was free of obstacles to regard it. The *ultimate* object of Marcel’s memory—“the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea” (Proust, *Way* 58)—is objective because it essentially could have been experienced by anyone whose perspective allowed her to do so. This essence ties it to the material or real context in which it occurred as the basis for its being an object—as such it is, insofar as it is a memory of an experience of the real world, not tied to the peculiar subject—Marcel—from whose perspective it is given to us.<sup>42</sup> This is, of course, bracketing the fact that the whole belongs to fiction, a context of ideal objectivity which deserves its own consideration.

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<sup>42</sup> My purpose in this discussion is to explain intrapsychical objects as objects in continuity with ideal and intrasubjective objects, and to argue that the ‘intra’ of ‘intrapsychic’ is a modification of an object that would not be confined to an individual subject’s psyche were it not essentially so modified.

Within the fictional ‘world’, the madeleine dipped in tea is a real object in itself, and the taste thereof is an object of experience, but it is emphatically not as a real object that Proust, his narrator, or his readers are concerned with it—his concern is not with the object of memory abstracted from its existence *as memory*, which as ‘intellectual memory’ “preserve nothing of the past itself” (Proust, *Way* 55), by which he means, I think, that they fail to preserve the ‘*pastness of the past*’ (to paraphrase an idea that seems to have been almost simultaneously invented by T.S. Eliot, in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” in 1921, and by Thomas Mann, in *The Magic Mountain* some time between 1912 and 1924), the ineluctable and non-reproducible sense of the memory *as a memory*. For this reason he distinguishes the lone pre-madeleine memory of the magic lantern and his difficult bedtime that stayed with him throughout his life from whatever other memories of Combray he might have been able to conjure up if he’d made the effort;

But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by an exercise of the will, by my intellectual memory, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shews us of the past *preserve nothing of the past itself*, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray.

(Proust, *Way* 55 italics added).

The meaning of the taste is not in its *real* objectivity, but its *psychic* objectivity, because the object is not the taste or even the originary experience of tasting, but *the memory itself* of that experience.<sup>43</sup> The object is still a really existing object, but its existence is localised in the real sphere of Marcel’s subjectivity—it is because of its essential location in the psychical region that the object has the meaning it has. To put this another way, its *eidos* is not *pure* in the sense of independent from the *eide* of its context, because it lacks the unconditioned universality which independence comes from. Rather its *eidos* is inextricably linked with other *eide* from entirely different systems of meaning, those being the *eide* that comprise Marcel’s psychical realm.

For an essence to be dependent for its sense on essences belonging to different realms, different systems of meaning, must be regarded as the mark of a ‘bound ideality’, an ideality bound to its context. Indeed, all essences are meaningless alone, as Hegel and the structuralists show. If complete unqualified autonomy were necessary for free ideality, the kind of ‘unrestricted universal validity’ which belongs to ideas such as geometrical

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As such, my use of this example is necessarily at odds with Deleuze’s interpretation of the role of signs in Proust, in which the ideal content is denied (see Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 6).

<sup>43</sup> What, in *Internal Time Consciousness* Husserl calls ‘secondary remembrance [*sekundäre Erinnerung*]’ or ‘recollection [*Wiedererinnerung*]’.

ones, then no such thing would exist. The meaning of geometrical ideas make this systematicity explicit—the meaning of the essence triangle not only relies on but *is* other geometrical essences such as angles and line segments. What distinguishes this kind of interrelation is that it is itself essential—the triangle only ever means anything within the system of geometry and on the basis of the other geometrical essences it incorporates. It is not, however, in any case dependent for its meaningfulness upon anything with which it is only contingently associated. The contrary is the case for essences of the kind I have just been describing from *Swann's Way*. The taste of madeleine dipped in tea is an essence, but it relies on a context in order to exist and be meaningful, which is to say it relies on other essences, such as the essence of Marcel's psyche, or the essence of the book *Swann's Way*. These essences are not 'essential' to *it*, for a number of different essences could fulfil this role, and in each case which particular one does is a contingent matter. Moreover, the essence on which that 'taste' depends will belong to a different domain—the psychical, for instance, or the literary—and therefore the essence of the taste of madeleine dipped in tea remains bound to it, to a context which it does not control.

Any object regarded insofar as it is the object of an intentional act is always a psychic object—the intentional act need not, as it does with Marcel's memory, comprise the full extent of the meaning of the object. In this case, the meaning of the memory is not at all its own real object, the taste of madeleine soaked in tea, but the recollection and its existence within Marcel's inner life; that is, the eruption of additional recollections and long-dormant territories within his mind that the one recollection catalyses—

And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.

(Proust, *Way* 59)

In spite of their essential distinctness, however, neither real nor psychic objects are actually orders of objects different from the ideal. The activity of consciousness is determined according to essential laws which shape its constitution of objects<sup>44</sup>, as I

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<sup>44</sup> See Held, Method 14-15: "The character of the activities of consciousness is not dependent on the empirically given objects that happen to be there, but instead on 'Essence,' that is, on the universal de-termination of types of objectivities."

discussed in the preceding chapter, and it is in the reduction of an object to its *eidos* that it is constituted as an object which transcends the act in which it is intended<sup>45</sup>; thus all objects are of necessity ideal. Only objects can come to consciousness,<sup>46</sup> and they do so by first being constituted according to essential laws that direct consciousness' 'sight' or activity, and therefore being immediately opened up to the possibility of repetition and all the other structures or 'coherences' of ideality. Psychic objects and real objects are objects which belong essentially to those regions, which we can tell because of the expressibility in language which belongs to them essentially insofar as they are objects of consciousness, not to mention the expression in fact by dint of which we learn of them, and their essential being-for-consciousness itself. As a literary object "the little crumb of madeleine" (Proust, *Way* 58) exists as an ideal object in the way Husserl specifies in the *Origin of Geometry* as, perhaps problematically, comprising not only the immortal truths of mathematics but also words, literary work, and perhaps other categories; "It is proper to a whole class of spiritual products of the cultural world, to which not only all scientific constructions and the sciences themselves belong but also, for example, the constructions of fine literature." (UG 160). However, that *crumb* is also a real object (even a physical object), as well as a psychic object, and insofar as it is any of those it is already ideal. The linguistic precondition for ideal objectivity, as Derrida discusses at length in *Voice and Phenomenon* and as I mentioned in the preceding section and will go on to discuss in more detail in the sixth chapter of this thesis, is expressibility in language as a possibility, and not actual external expression. However, it is clear in the *Origin* that the ideality belonging to 'constructions of fine literature', and even more clearly to the truths of geometry and mathematics, is of a special kind—especially in the invulnerability of such ideas to the vicissitudes of time, its 'historicity'—a kind which seems to be distinguished on the basis of ideality in a way that the generally ideal approach of phenomenology and transcendental study of consciousness would seem to resist. Husserl seems to mean here what Derrida, borrowing the terminology of *Experience and Judgment*, calls 'free ideality', which is to say, in contrast to the 'bound idealities' of factual and psychical objects bound to their eidetic contexts, ideas to which belong "unconditioned, so-called apodictic universality" (Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 52). However, it is in terms of the *difference* of the ideal that Husserl explains

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<sup>45</sup> See Carr; "Transcendence is conceived as the nonreducibility of what is meant to the particular act or acts in which it is meant." (Carr, Problem 87)

<sup>46</sup> "from where?" one might be tempted to ask. Are we supposed to believe that the objects and consciousness itself comes from nowhere? In a sense, yes—there is nothing which is apodictic and

the existence of both ideal science and literature. In fact, the whole problematic of the *Origin* is predicated on the distinctness of the ideal—that geometry underwent a transformation when it became ideal and that it had an origin that was not ideal, at least in the same sense. That is, that there is meaning in the transformation Husserl describes in his fundamental question; “how does geometrical ideality (like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor's soul, to its ideal objectivity?” (UG 161/357-8) Moreover, Husserl would have us understand that the transformation occurs through language—“In advance we see that it occurs by means of language, through which it receives, so to speak, its linguistic living body [Sprachleib].” (UG 161)—which we have understood since *Logical Investigations* to have belonged to the eidetic in its most general sense. How can language be understood as either a late addition or itself undergoing a transformation, when it is crucial from the start to any sense of phenomenology as concerned with transcendental consciousness?

The coherent interdependence of objectivity, reproducibility, community, language and history, which I will articulate in its full depth in the third chapter, is meant to account for an ideal object's belonging to our historical world while remaining invulnerable to the winds of change, a concrete capacity the function of which must be accounted for in order to avoid the non-critical presupposition of a more-or-less ill-defined non-worldly existence, but the role of language and indeed of objectivity itself is impossible to understand without that which it plays in all conscious activity coming to the fore and casting doubt again on any distinction between ideal objects in the pure sense and objects which are themselves eidetically reduced but essentially dependent on real and psychical factuality. These amount to qualifications of a universal idealism and denote regions of being rather than existential differences, as Klaus Held states;

Thus there are areas of objectivities, ‘regions of being,’ as Husserl says, that are differentiated according to the special characteristics of their being, their ‘Eidos,’ that is, the mental view that they offer in a corresponding originary intuition. Eidetic objective determination corresponds, according to the *a priori* of correlation, to a universal, eidetic condition of the intentional acts that are related to the objectivity in question.

(Held, “Method” 14-15)

If there is no existential difference between different kinds of ideal objects, and if they are explicitly dependent in all cases on the possibility of expression in language, then what

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prior to consciousness—any inquiry into where consciousness comes from can only be done on the

difference is there left for a *Sprachleib* to make? If it is not a difference of type, what *is* the difference between geometry's psychical origin and its mature universality, and how does language bridge that gap?

The 'bound'-ness of geometry's originary psychical context, the eidetically irreducible co-implications which belongs to the origin of geometry prior to its idealisation and coming-to-be properly geometrical, is crucial to the meaning of its ideal existence. The psychical object consists not only of its strictly ideal content, but also of the psychical and factual contexts in and by which the idea exists. The coming-to-be strictly and freely ideal which geometry is capable of consists of the freeing of the ideal content by *shedding* the additional signification and qualification contributed in a psychical object. This can only occur if the object is meaningful in that kind of way—if it is yet meaningful when it is no longer qualified—or to the extent *that* it is meaningful in that way. The little crumb of madeleine is not such an ideal object, since the ideal meaningfulness of this object is contingent on its factual objectivity, modification by the psychical objectivity as in Marcel's memory of the little crumb, or some other explanation of how and in what region it can be found. "The little crumb of madeleine" (Proust, *Way* 58), however, is such an ideal object, because as a literary object it exists objectively for everyone independently of psychical or real context in order to make it meaningful. By citing its source and putting it in quotation marks, it is still not 'freed' from all modification, rather, the essential modifications are thus brought into the essence intended, as part of what constitutes that object. It is not made universal and unconditioned, since for its essence such as it is, that would not be possible, but by defining the "'secret' and even unnoticed restriction" (Derrida, "Pharmacy" 55), even if it is not possible to reduce it, it is possible to determine the whole as ideal and universal in the sense of not being subject to history's flux. It is eternally an object belonging to the factual literary object *Swann's Way*. Perhaps Husserl ought to have distinguished the literary object as a special case of ideal object, which he suggested that he was unwilling to do (see UG 160), but the particularity and dependence of the literary object is different from the particularity and dependence of other factual objects in that it shares the kind of atemporality which belongs to completely free idealities (if such things can be found). On the other hand, the pythagorean theorem—the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides—requires no qualification whatsoever, according to Husserl, to be meaningful. Rather than being conditional, its ideal objectivity is unqualified and universal. As I argued in greater detail

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basis of its objectification and presentation to consciousness.

earlier in this section, the ‘process’ that Husserl describes (UG 160f) from an intrapersonal origin to ideal objectivity by way of language cannot be taken literally as a transformation in the object’s way of existing—the objectifying potential of the idea belongs to any object from the start, as does the potential for incorporation in a ‘living body’ of language, but the modifications of the idea required for its meaningfulness as belonging to a particular subject’s psyche constrain the language in which it can be put just as it constrains the idea itself. Only when these modifications can be eliminated is the pure ideal object’s universality able to take full advantage of language, history and the rest.

An object is ideal *tout court* according to its own ideal content—those ideas the content of which allows them to be used in an unqualified sense Husserl calls ideal (*tout court*). As Derrida notes; “science claims an essential privilege: it does not permit itself to be enclosed in any historically determined culture as such, for it has the universal validity of *truth*.” (IOG 58) ‘Science’ is the name for the totality of all ideas which permit the simple and universal unqualified employment. The ideas of science are pure and infinite, they are uncontaminated and unlimited, unconditioned and universal, as other ideas must be, by the auxiliaries we call ‘context’. Because science’s ideas are pure and infinite, science is the vanguard of human culture; “designates culture’s *eidos par excellence*” (IOG 58), as Derrida says, in contrast to the *Weltanschauung*, the idea of the finite idea to which, in *Weltanschauungsphilosophie*, an infinite idea was supposed to be reduced and made no different from any other idea, all of which must be delimited and contaminated by qualifications.

It is necessary to look to the ideas themselves in order to see how it is that the meaning of an idea can loose the bounds of its psychical context, or what makes the difference between an idea that is independent and one which yet requires contextualisation for it to be meaningful, because regardless of whether the object is full and self-sufficient or requires conditions that must be explicated it<sup>47</sup> always depends on the pure possibility of language, just as language depends on objectivity in order for it to be about anything or to have anything to express.<sup>48</sup> The difference between the psychical and the ideal, which is to say qualified and unqualified ideas is not language. Language is not a difference between

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<sup>47</sup> This is not a categorial difference—the fully ideal object has conditions as well, the *coherence* of ideality. So it is not strictly speaking true to say that it is ‘unconditioned’, but it is true to say that it is universal, because the pure idea’s conditions are the universal conditions for any idea whatsoever.

<sup>48</sup> See UG 161; “language itself, in all its particularizations (words, sentences, speeches), is, as can easily be seen from the grammatical point of view, thoroughly made up of ideal objects”, and UG 162 “Language, for its part, as function and exercised capacity, is related correlatively to the world, the universe of objects which is linguistically expressible in its being and its being-such.”



ideas but the basic precondition for the eidetic. As an idea (in the Kantian sense), language is the function which makes the continuity between the regional and the universal possible.

In the previous chapter, in my discussion of the eidetic and the Kantian concept of idea, I made the point that there is a continuity between those essences which are distinguished in *Ideas I* as “‘ideal’ concepts” (Id I 166), which exact concepts such as geometrical ones describe, and the essences which are involved in all other conscious intending, and in particular of the conscious intending called ‘perception’, insofar as any essence of an object of experience is not ‘given’, but its givenness is an idea in the sense of a ‘goal’. This is why language already belongs to every *eidos* as an idea or possibility. The idea (in the Kantian sense) is only possible because of language (and the other possibilities or faculties of ideality), therefore that language is anticipated as an idea by the eidetic is by §143 of *Ideas I*. According to a logic that I will discuss in the chapters of this thesis dedicated to tracing Derrida’s reading of Husserl and his own philosophy, Derrida recognises the always already there-ness of language as the impossibility of getting out ‘ahead’ of ideality to the origin of experience itself, the unconstituted originality of a primordial ‘now’; “Since the ideal is always thought by Husserl in the form of the Idea in the kantian sense, this substitution of ideality for nonideality, of objectivity for non-objectivity, is *deferred to infinity*.” (VP 86)

Language belongs to psychical objects already as a possibility, and because of that possibility the communication and even the exactitude of universal objectivity can be attained. The whole ‘transformation’ occurs within what already belongs to the object of the psyche, and this is crucial for Husserl’s account, because otherwise the origin of geometry would not be the origin of geometry, but something that happened prior to geometry, requiring the addition of still more radically ‘other’ elements in order for the origin to occur. Husserl’s central question—“how does geometrical ideality (like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul, to its ideal objectivity?” (UG 161)—is not a question chasing after transformation, but after continuity. The one can originate from the other because the possibility for it is already there. Once more, the story of history is one of continuity, not its opposite.

### ***c. Uniting the epistemological and the historical***

So far in this chapter concerned with demonstrating the necessity of an ideal study of history I have shown why any historical discourse relies on an implicit, explicit or dissimulated foundation of ideality. After that I explained the ideal structure of consciousness insofar as it is intentional, which of course dictates that objects of a historical consciousness must be eidetically reduced. With these I have tried to show the necessity, first, of an ideal study of history and the poverty of a historiology which would ignore it, and, second, that the ideal science necessary for the understanding of history is not something that needs to be invented ad hoc, but already belongs to the structure of consciousness. But Husserl enters into the study of history not merely as a cloistered discipline, but because historical thinking, as I established in the previous chapter, is necessary for science itself; the infinite task of reason is always a historical enquiry. This is the reason peculiar to the phenomenology of history, and in particular to Husserl's ambition of 'reactivation', that eidetic science alone is suitable for the highest purposes of a history. Factual history is unsuitable for the grounding of geometrical truth-meaning because the integrity of geometry as an eidetic science would not be protected by a merely possibly originary meaning—the historical relation to the origin must also have the character of necessity in order for the originary meaning to be able to explain the sense of geometry in a way that would not be arbitrary and ad hoc. It is not just because geometry is an eidetic science that the sense it makes is necessarily eidetic—the sense of any science is properly eidetic—but the demand for apodeictic certainty in geometry and similar sciences imbues it with a kind of purity that will not broach the introduction of or reliance on contingent facts, because “the *sense* of eidetic science *necessarily precludes any incorporation of cognitional results yielded by empirical sciences.*” (Id I 17)

It is not immediately obvious that the strictures applied to the eidetic science itself must also be applied to that whereby we derive its meaning, but a brief consideration of the kind of meaning needed to undo the crisis (briefer than I will have, and already have had, space for elsewhere) will show that this is imperative. Although I've mentioned that the priority of a solution is dubious in the *Origin of Geometry*, as an ostensive aim it can still help us understand the orientation to an eidetic science of history, and thus the entire eidetic complex in which it plays an ineluctable part. The meaning at issue would be the relation of geometry to the world (or to be specific, the lifeworld). This relation would constitute the structure of geometry's meaning, while the meaning itself would be contingent on what that relationship is, as well as what the world is and what parts or aspects of it are meaningfully so related. In order for this to have any bearing on geometry

in the way that meanings have bearing on the meaningful—that is, to determine their sense and the ways they are usable—it must be singular and univocal, and this part cannot be played by a fact which is a merely possible (however certain by virtue of being fortified by various factual evidence), and thus open to competing ‘meaning-fundaments’. Only the ‘reactivation’ of an essential, *a priori* meaning could have the determining and grounding effect on geometry that can make it truly meaningful and therefore resolve the crisis.

This actually makes the role of ideality different in the case of the history of geometry than it must be as the foundation of a factual history, as described in the first section of this chapter. Because history must be accounted for as a transcendental science, it is not enough for ideality to be merely the meaning-giving structure of historical facts that is the least necessary involvement with ideality for any discourse aspiring to be a science. A phenomenological history cannot be merely eidetic in the way that every science including factual or empirical sciences must be—it will have to be an entirely eidetic science, and as such free from factuality in the way that Husserl describes eidetic science—“every eidetic science is necessarily independent of every science of matters of fact” (Id I 17)—otherwise it would remain beholden to the contingencies and extrinsic effects that ‘factuality’ stands for. The peculiar meaning-giving project of the ideal history of geometry is inconceivable without the apodeictic certainty that can be derived from concerning oneself only with the pure possibilities of the science’s genesis; “Thereby [by way of imaginary variation] we have removed every bond to the factually valid historical world and have regarded the world itself [merely] as one of the conceptual possibilities.”<sup>49</sup> (UG 177)

Ideal history must undertake the inquiry into the essence of geometry’s origin and development—“Starting from what we know, from our geometry, or rather from the older handed-down forms (such as Euclidean geometry), there is an inquiry back into the submerged original beginnings of geometry as they necessarily must have been in their ‘primally establishing’ function.” (UG 158)—rather than concern itself with historical figures, extant texts, the relative reliability of the archive, palimpsests, or mere happenstance of archeological discovery. Ideal history is not dependent on facts and evidence because it appeals instead to “essential structures that can be revealed through methodical inquiry” (UG 172) which I will explain in the next paragraphs. This eidetic inquiry is *essentially* historical or backwards-looking because unlike a so-called factual history which relies on facts that were in principle already facts at the moment inquired about,

ideal history concerns essential structures that are only essential retrospectively—it is only the existence of those ‘handed-down forms’ of geometry which allow us to posit the existence of their ‘primal establishing’ with absolute certainty or any conceivability at all. This retrospection comprises the “zigzag pattern” (Crisis 58) of history’s essential structure<sup>50</sup>, in which the incomplete understanding of the past and the present to which it appears are called upon in turns to bring each other out of darkness, like the blind leading the blind—“Thus we have no other choice than to proceed forward and backward in a zigzag pattern; the one must help the other in an interplay.” (Crisis 58) It is as though more light shed on the past allows it to help tug the present a little further out of shadow and vice-versa in an infinite process. This necessity marks the enquiry as fundamentally a *Rückfrage* or return-enquiry that is not conceivable as a mere atemporal transcendental enquiry.

In order to understand how this necessity is determined, let us look back at the methods of eidetic science in Husserl’s earlier work. In *Ideas I* Husserl writes; “From matters of fact nothing ever follows but matters of fact.” (Id I 17) In particular, essences, to which belong the *eidetic universality*; “the not-able-to-be-otherwise of a matter of universal insight” (Bernet, Kern and Marbach, *Introduction* 80), incommensurable with factuality’s ‘It is thus; in respect of its essence it could be otherwise’(-ness), do not derive their necessity from facts, the mere accumulation of facts, or even from a systematic process of induction. Essences require a bringing to mind of essences themselves through the method called ‘imaginative variation’ or ‘free variation’ in which the essential limits of the idea are explored and tested in ‘imagination’ or ‘phantasy’ in order to determine the “eidetic predicatively formed affair-complex” (Id I 14) that constitutes a given essence;

We do this by making the essence of the material thing something given originally (perhaps on the basis of a free phantasying [*Insertion in Copy A*: and variation.] of a material thing) in order, then, in this presentive consciousness, to perform the steps of thinking which the ‘insight,’ the originary givenness of the predicatively formed eidetic affair-complex explicitly set down by that proposition, requires.

(Id I 15)

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<sup>49</sup> This implies a kind of historical imaginary variation.

<sup>50</sup> As Derrida claims—“the ‘zigzag’ way of proceeding—a procedure that the *Crisis* proposes as a sort of necessary ‘circle’ and which is only the pure form of every historical experience” (IOG 51)

In other words, ‘mere’ facts or even generalisation from facts do not produce essences—these need to be derived through the contemplation of the limits and necessities of whatever *essence* is described thereby;

Every attempted transition to an *a priori* in this determinate sense (of an unconditioned universality obtained by looking and seeing) demands liberation from the fact. The fact in our case is the world actually and factually experienced by us, with these factual things. Let us drop this fact.

(PP 52)

Moreover, facts pertain only to individuals, by virtue of their essential contingency.

The eidetic is a realm of objectivity apart from and independent of the factual; it can even be acquired independently of sensory acquisition, through imagination.<sup>51</sup> The objects intended in this way are not facts but ideas; “*The essence (Eidos) is a new sort of object. Just as the datum of individual or experiencing intuition is an individual object, so the datum of eidetic intuition is a pure essence.*” (Id I 9) It is crucial to distinguish these types and not to mistake ideas as derivative of facts (though they may, but not necessarily, originate in sensory experience as abstractions from it), or to confuse a truly existing ideal object for any matter-of-fact; “*Positing of and, to begin with, intuitive seizing upon, essences implies not the slightest positing of any individual factual existence; pure eidetic truths contain not the slightest assertion about matters of fact.*” (Id I 11)

Apart from the abstraction from sensory experience, eidetic experience is possible on the basis of ideas alone, and this is how ideal history proceeds. The method ideal history employs and the instrument of its unfettering is the aforementioned ‘imaginary variation’. Although I’ve already briefly described this method of determining an object’s *eidetic universality* through the transformation in pure *phantasy* thereof in order to determine its ideal necessities and limits, and I will go on to explain, partly through Husserl’s limited treatment thereof in the *Origin* and partly in an interpretive extrapolation, how this works in the case of history specifically. First, however, I will explain the general process of ‘variation’ in more depth, and support its independence from facts even in the capacity of stepping stones by drawing again on *Ideas I*, and also on *Phenomenological Psychology*, in order to explain its relationship with intentional consciousness. It is through an eidetic reduction

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<sup>51</sup> “Accordingly, to seize upon an essence itself, and to seize upon it *originarily*, we can start from corresponding experiencing intuitions, *but equally well* from intuitions which are non-experiencing, which do not seize upon factual existence but which are instead ‘merely imaginative’. (Id I 10)

and the employment of this tool of imagination that ideal history acquires its eidetic universality and independence from facts, as Husserl writes in the *Origin*;

And precisely in this free variation, and in running through the conceivable possibilities for the life-world, there arises, with apodictic self-evidence, an essentially general set of elements going through all the variants; and of this we can convince ourselves with truly apodictic certainty. Thereby we have removed every bond to the factually valid historical world and have regarded this world itself [merely] as one of the conceptual possibilities.

(UG 177)

Eidetic variation refers to the operation in which *imaginary variation* is employed to reduce an intentional object to its essence by establishing its limits or “pure, ideal possibilities” by way of a “*variation performed in pure phantasy*” (Bernet, Kern and Marbach, *Introduction* 79) in order to determine the *eidetic universality* belonging to it. ‘Eidetic seeing’ or ‘intuition of essences’, which Husserl discusses in *Ideas I* §4, is the originary apprehension in pure thought of ideas which may or may not have “ever been given in actual experience” (Id I 11). In this way ideas are objects of consciousness in much the same way that experienced individual objects are objects of consciousness. Unconditional universality, Husserl claims in *Ideas I*, belongs to judgments which are not about individual essences, but judgments which are true for any essence subsumed under it, without it being ‘about’ any particular one, an entire ‘class’ taken as a whole, or even the type of essence that may be subsumed under it ‘as such’; “Thus in pure geometry we do not judge, as a rule, about the Eidos straight line, angle, triangle, conic section, or the like, but rather about any straight line whatever, any angle whatever” (Id I 12-13). It belongs to the essence of a judgment of universality that it is, unlike any other type of judgment, not of a given essence as object, but also that an essential possibility of subsuming a genus and particulars belongs to it: “It is, however, of the essence of the situation which we are at all times free to shift to the corresponding Objectivating attitude, that this shifting is precisely an essential possibility.” (Id I 13)<sup>52</sup> This kind of subsumption would be the singularisation of a judgment based in eidetic universality and its application to a particular individual according to the *eidetic necessity* that issues from the essence’s proper universality; “the judgment itself, the asserted proposition, is called an apodictic (also an apodictically “necessary”) consequence of the universal judgment with which it is connected.” (Id I 14)

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<sup>52</sup> The claim that such judgments are not ‘of’ an essence as object may appear to violate the basic claim of transcendental idealism—that consciousness is always of an object—but this is of course

Although eidetic universality and necessity are key logical instruments in *Ideas I*, the method of deriving them, of determining what is truly “unconditioned, so-called apodictic universality” (PP 52), and distinguishing that from what is ‘merely’ an empirical probability, such as a law derived in induction (“Showing [that something is indeed a ‘felt necessity’] is the test whether the felt necessity is a genuinely apodictic one, and not a confusion with a merely empirical indication” [PP 52]), that is; *imaginary* or *free* variation, is not described in methodological fulness until the lectures on *Phenomenological Psychology* in 1925. Imaginary variation is just that, the variation of the object in imagination, but in order to determine what is shared by all. This mental operation begins with the freeing of the imagination from its subordination to an originary fact, its relegation to “a nullity in connection with [the fact’s] existence and in conflict with its empirical nexus” (PP 53). Husserl is very clear in this writing that a reduction is necessary here in order to intuit pure essences—this is his *eidetic reduction*. It is necessary, Husserl says, to expose the “‘secret’ and even unnoticed restriction” (PP 55) of essences derived in advance of this reduction to relation with “our factually actual world” (PP 55), in order to determine essences which smuggle in these relations as hidden characteristics; “Only if we become aware of this restriction and consciously put it out of play and thereby also free the most extensive surrounding horizon of the variants from all restrictions, from all experiential acceptance, do we create perfect purity.” (PP 55) Only given this purity of essence is what he calls, in *Ideas I*, *unconditioned* or *unrestricted universal validity*, meaning that its universality and essentiality is not predicated on an unexamined and hidden restriction to factual existence (see *Ideas* 15), possible. Because only in the purity of the eidetic reduction is it possible to distinguish whether the essence of contingency is ‘essentially’ there. Explained in terms of this restriction, the eidetic reduction seems to require its own *epoché*; the reduction of factuality, the ‘factual world’, even a sort of ‘factual attitude’.

The special meaning of the fact (in the sense of the ‘factually actual’) is eliminated, and with it the relegation of “every instance of imagining it other than it is” (PP 53) to mere contra-indication is at an end. Instead all imaginable variations are *essentially* equivalent, regardless of whether or not one of them happens to be or to have been empirically established in fact; “I can instead let every fictional transformation stand as equal to it and let it itself stand only as one possibility next to these other possibilities.” (PP

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not the case; in such cases as in the case of all judgments, it is the judgment that is the object of consciousness.

53) There is thus, of course, no need to start with a factual variant as a basis for a set of varied and invariable qualities; “We stand then so to speak in a pure fantasy-world, a world of absolutely pure possibilities; every such possibility can then become the central member for possible pure variations in the mode of optionalness, and from each there results then an absolutely pure *eidos*” (PP 55). All of this is perfectly valid because on the basis of the *eide* no existential claim is made; “*essences implies not the slightest positing of any individual factual existence*” (Id I 11)

In the ‘systematic’ and ‘arbitrary’ variation of objects “in every possible manner” (PP 53), “what differs in the variation is of no concern to us” (PP 54); rather, “we can at any time direct our regard toward the fact that an invariant necessarily pervades it or pervades all the variants” (PP 54). The invariants expose universal qualities possessed in common by all of the varied ‘images’, and makes possible a determination of fundamental essences underpinning them; “Then a unity pervades this multiplicity of copy-fashionings, namely, that of the essence which grounds the similarity.” (PP 54)

History as an eidetic science works by way of imaginary variation as well, only as a *Rückfrage* it is a retrospective variation; an inquiry into what must have been the case given the current state of affairs. *History* is this temporal removal within the eidetic reduction. This is a significant difference, because whereas eidetic variation as it is described in *Ideas I* and *Phenomenological Psychology* works because the object which the imagination begins with, whether it exists purely in phantasy to begin with or not, cannot be distinguished from the other objects which are ‘derived’ from it in phantasy, or from the essence which is the end result, in any essential sense—indeed, the whole point of the method is to derive essences which are identically shared by all, and that would be impossible if there were some essential difference which it were necessary to keep in reserve. Yet this is exactly what is needed for ideal history, in which it is not the essence at hand that is sought, but the origin of the essence. History must show both what the origin of geometry is, and that it is *essentially* thus. Therefore, a transtemporal sort of eidetic variation is required by a *Rückfrage*.

Though not explicitly set out, the itinerary should not be so complicated after all, and it does not properly demand any method not already introduced in eidetic variation. It is merely a matter of adding an extra step. We should imagine the historical phantasy to work like this; a possible origin (and originary meaning-fundament) of existing geometrical science is imagined, and on the basis of that possible origin imaginary variation is used to derive its essence. Since it is not necessary for the ‘original’ object of the varying exercise to



derive from experience, it is perfectly legitimate to do so. The essence of the origin (the essential origin), if it is properly derived, will be exactly the necessary and sufficient conditions of the origin of geometry—the ground conditions without which no such thing could have come into being, and which themselves constitute the complete and adequate conditions of possibility for that coming into being, which is to say, for a geometry to be invented which is meaningful. Of course, there are other conditions, which are lost to the contingency of the event (the name of that mythical ‘Thales of geometry’, for example, but these are not the relevant ones. Talking about ideal history in terms of conditions is to make appropriate use of the discourse of causation. This is indeed appropriate, since ideal history concerns the essential origins. But we must remember the epistemic purpose of the enquiry of the search for origins—Husserl does not undertake his *Rückfrage* and the elaboration of an entirely new type of historical science in order to determine what the cause of the ideal sciences are. The essential origin is important because if it is possible to determine what was needed and adequate for the invention of geometry, then it is possible to determine the meaning, the originary evidence or urevidence that could alone ground it in meaning.

The necessity with which the essential origin is thus derived already means that this origin is internal to the meaning of the current science which supplied the only evidence for it. It is only because the eidetics of the origin are essential to the truth of science as it is that the essential history has been able to discover them. The historical enquiry is therefore always at the same time an enquiry into the essence of truth, the truth that this *Rückfrage* started out with. It is always an enquiry which brings together the historical and the epistemological in defiance of their accustomed separation. History is capable of informing us of the meanings of our sciences in a way that goes far beyond the merely anecdotal and speculative gobbets of factual history. That is to say, as long as history itself is possible. And it is to the possibility of history—the way that historical essences are able to appear to a subject, and the complex structure of ideal existence which sustains historical essence—that Husserl devotes even more attention to than he does the methods of essential history in *The Origin of Geometry*, and to which I will turn in the forthcoming chapter.

If the idea of a history which because of an eidetic reduction frees itself from the factual seems to be, if not incapable of contributing to the resolution of the crisis, at least *not a history*, not retaining anything of what must be meant by a history (which must possess the essence of factuality, what Derrida calls by Fink’s term ‘*Erstmaligkeit*’ and will define as

“one for which we should not be able to substitute another fact as an example in order to decipher its essence.” [IOG 47]), then it is either because, as Derrida explains, there is a ‘historical reduction’ (See IOG 47f) which is not simply subject to the eidetic reduction, or because a confusion persists between the external history which is concerned with such matters of *fact*, and internal history, for which the essence of the fact of the invention of geometry is beside the point. Husserl seems clear on this point at the moment when he excludes the factuality of history’s ‘Thales of geometry’ from consideration; the only essence demanded for ideal history is the essence of the invention, which can be separated from the essence of its factuality. Husserl seems to be maintaining that we can say of the invention that it is essential to the idea, without yet saying that its occurrence at a particular place and time has any importance—but is this not precisely the ‘essence-of-the-first-time’ which is factuality? According to Derrida, however, the essence of factuality, the ‘essence-of-the-first-time’ (*Erstmaligkeit*), is indissociable from the essence of the invention. Is it possible that this invention occurred more than once, as so often seems in fact to be the case, or would only one be an invention while the rest are (mere) rediscoveries? What is necessary for ideal history is nothing more than the essence of the inauguration and its conditions. This factuality is given to us in a historical reduction, in which “a primordial act which created the object whose *eidos* is determined by the iterative reduction” (IOG 48) is reawakened, and not just that objective idea itself. This kind of *historical reduction*, which Derrida avers is not simply secondary to the eidetic reduction, comes into his account in his *Introduction* with respect to the very tricky concept of *reactivation* in the *Origin*. Two things are clear about factuality that may seem in tension: the only way a fact can have meaning in history or anywhere is as reduced, and on the other hand as a historical enquiry and not merely a logico-epistemic one, ideal history unearths the singularity of something like facts from which ideas originated, but only insofar as these singular events were *essential*, as in the ‘essence-of-the-first-time’. However, this conceals a profound consistency within eidetic reduction. As eidetic themselves it is possible to raise the factual context out of the oblivion of contingency which is lost forever from historical certainty, and to treat the ‘facts’ insofar as they are *essential*, which is to say, not really facts at all since ‘fact’ implies contingency, as I wrote in the first section of this chapter. As Derrida writes “This ‘*must*’ (have appeared) marks the necessity now recognized and timelessly assigned to a past fact of an eidetic pre-scription and of an *a priori* norm. I can state this value of necessity independently of all factual cognition.” (IOG 49) This may sound like, at worst; nonsense, and at best; waffling, but what it means is just that the retrospect of history is able to drag

facts out of contingency into necessity, and to transpose what was once external into internal history (*innere Historie*)—although it is true that necessity cannot be derived from fact through a process of induction or any other kind of reasoning, there is all the potential in the world for rigorous eidetic method to establish clear-cut necessities in our retrospective view which did not appear before. And there is no reason why a fact cannot provide the impetus for this eidetic seeing (*Wesensschau*). If these two statements can be reconciled it is because the eidetic reduction does indeed have a simple priority, and the historical reduction works through it—the retrospective clarifies and limits imaginary variation. I will return to these questions in chapter four when I evaluate Derrida’s reading of Husserl in his *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*.

In the first chapter I explained the crisis in terms of science’s development of the idea and the eventual dominance of ideas and substitution thereof for subjective evidence. In the second chapter thus far I have explained the role(s) of the idea in science and history as well as indicating that an essential history can retrieve (even reactivate) the evidence that the ideal itself had ‘forgotten’. This ‘reactivation’ (*Reaktivierung*) is the bringing to ideal objectivity what had been abandoned by scientific idealism in the first place—the subjective side of experience. When geometry was invented it realised the purpose of objects of consciousness which preceded it of the adequate definition of those objects, but the method it employed—an exact ideal objectivity in geometry—was incapable of preserving the subjective side of the experience of objects. Reactivation, a history of essences intended not only to preserve ideal objects but to retrieve, as objects, experiences which had never existed as objects before and thus had never realised their potential for being shared and preserved in language, would proceed by way of essential history. I have presented the scientificity of ideal history, and described the imaginary variation which is really its ultimate step, but in the next chapter I will explain the structure of history which makes it possible and indispensable to ideality itself—the coherence of interdependent ideal structures. This is the common support both of reactivation and geometry itself. The explanation of the coherence of ideality is also necessary in order to understand what is meant by the ‘reactivation’ of subjective originary evidence and how science has been able to function, albeit in its critical state, without it.

But before this I will explain what is in need of reactivation, and how it is that science functions in its absence (which must be known in order to understand how it is

needed). Reactivation is the retrospective realisation of evidence, or ‘self-evidence’. Self-evidence, Husserl explains, is, in concrete terms, “the successful realization of an intention [*Vorhabe*]” (UG 160). In other words, it is the “grasping an entity with the consciousness of its original being-itself-there [*Selbst-da*]” (UG 160) which, phenomenologically, comprises the experience of a constituted object (see UG 162). The kind of evidence which a reactivation would seek would be the *urevidence* I wrote about briefly in the previous chapter, which in Leavey’s translation is rendered ‘original self-evidence’. In order to clarify its meaning, it is necessary to consider original self-evidence in contrast to the axiomatic self-evidence which is not dependent on historical disclosure but is also insufficient to ground its meaning in experience/the lifeworld. It is original self-evidence alone that is capable of providing geometrical meaning with its link to phenomenological sense and to the lifeworld. As Husserl notes, “Original self-evidence must not be confused with the self-evidence of ‘axioms’; for axioms are in principle already the results of original meaning-construction and always have this behind them.” (UG 168) Axiomatic self-evidence is a logical and linguistic, non-historical yet active understanding of “geometrical idealities which have been explicated but not brought to original self-evidence” (UG 168), and which is therefore achievable within the meaningful and linguistic capacities of geometry itself.

Peculiar is the word that Husserl, with nearly rhythmic consistency, uses to describe language, its functions and effects. Language is capable of a “peculiar [*eigenartige*] logical activity” (UG 167), namely the “peculiar [*eigentiümliche*] sort of activity best described by the word ‘explication’” (UG 167)—the activation of what is in the first place passively received as “a straightforwardly valid meaning, taken up as a unitary and undifferentiated” (UG 167)—which produces (or rather, Husserl says, *is*) “a peculiar [*eigenartige*] sort of self-evidence”, the kind of understanding made possible by articulating “what has been read (or an interesting sentence from it), extracting one by one, in separation from what has been vaguely, passively received as a unity, the elements of meaning, thus bringing the total validity to active performance in a new way on the basis of the individual validities” (IOG 167).

There is indeed much that is peculiar about axiomatic self-evidence, but it only makes sense that language alone, and its explication, would not be able to provide a fully adequate original self-evidence, which would have to comprise that not caught up by the objective idealities essential to the function of language. It makes sense because geometry, even when it has been reactivated as a whole and explicated in each of its meanings and components, is capable only of “purely logical self-evidences” (IOG 168); meaning that

explication is able to bring out of indifferent concealment in matter-of-factness merely the particular logical necessity of what are nevertheless part of the system and derive that meaning only from that membership. Explication does not require historical investigation, since the logical meaning of axioms is systematic (derived from their role and place in a system) and not contingent on the phenomenological evidence for their meaning, of which original self-evidence consists. However, without the extrinsic, outside-reference of urevidence, of original self-evidence—that is, self-evidence in which the ‘entity’ ‘grasped’ is grasped originally in experience—the entire science remains arbitrary; “a tradition empty of meaning” (IOG 169).

This is the difference of original self-evidence; the particular way that primal self-evidence realises an intention is capable of grounding the truth of geometry in its “historical original meaning” (UG 179). Just like the axiomatic self-evidence, original self-evidence presents ideal objects that belong to geometry in their individual validity, but whereas in the case of the former the presentation occurred through a separate and systematic consideration of its linguistic and logical meaning; in the case of the latter the presentation is achieved by considering the necessary history of its creation as an ideal object on the basis of ideal objectivities themselves requiring ‘realisation’ in turn. The process of reactivation must proceed until the ideal objects which belong to geometry yet in their realisation can be seen to depend historically upon “the prescientific cultural world” (UG 172), or rather upon subsequent ideal objects of which that world is comprised.<sup>53</sup> At this point, which is not a final point of historical investigation and yet suffices to ground the meaning of geometry in meaning which is beyond it and not specific to it (“Of course, this cultural world has in turn its own questions of origin, which at first remain unasked.” [UG 172]), the resources of linguistic and axiomatic meaning, which are confined to geometry itself are exhausted.

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<sup>53</sup> Roman Ingarden clarifies the aims of the investigation into subjectivity, and the meaning of subjectivity as such: “phenomenology is supposed to grasp the ultimate, the absolute of pure subjectivity in its own character of subjectivity. Hence it is to pursue 'objective' knowledge of 'subjectivity'. Thus, what is to be condemned is not 'objectivism' as such (in the sense here supposed), but only the objectivism of the positive natural sciences since, as Husserl asserts, they are not capable of reaching the being-in-itself of nature.” (Roman Ingarden, “What is New in Husserl’s ‘Crisis’?” 45-46)

### 3 – The origins of history

In chapter one I explained how Husserl's critical project introduces the necessity of history in the creation and existential support of objective truth. After that, I embarked on an explanation of what ideal history is, first by explaining 'ideal history', in part contrasting it with 'factual history', and explaining how the eidetic science of phenomenology functions in relation specifically to history in order to bring to it scientific rigour. In this third chapter, I will explain the phenomenological structure of ideal history as a node in a web of discrete but interdependent possibilities of ideal phenomena on which the possibility of any ideality depends equally, and from which it is therefore inseparable (Husserl refers to this edifice as a *Zusammenhang*—a coherence). It is this *coherence* which accounts for the possibility of history. This dependence of ideal history on the entire ideal edifice and the particular form of lifeworld it makes possible explains how history, including any historical object, such as a geometrical truth, exists on the basis of the phenomenologically given, and in so doing avoids the necessity of subscribing to the metaphysics of a platonic idealism in order to account for it. If there is to be a study of history and historical things it must start with the essence of history, and only on that basis treat historical variation or the historicity of facts, if at all. Without accounting for the essence of history, history itself as well as all knowledge would be resigned to a historical relativism unable even to support the idea of history on which its critique is based. The vagaries of history themselves would be unable even to maintain their own resignation to ignorance and mystery without the support of an idea of history and the rest of the ideal *coherence*. Even the assertion that flux and change keep the ghosts of the past hidden requires a logic to make sense of the idea of change. As a breed of scepticism, the unwillingness to seek the stable foundations of history's flow (in nowhere but history itself, of course) call to mind Hegel's damning indictment; "Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?" (Hegel, *Spirit* 47)

Husserl's ideal science of history walks the narrow road between dogmatism and scepticism by way of its eidetic reduction. As ideal, history and its partners in the ideal coherence are possibilities—it is always as possibilities that language, repetition, writing, etc. are essential to ideal objectivity.

This is supposed to be the foundation of any other historical phenomenology; whether Husserl's or someone else's, whether acknowledged or dissimulated; because this explanation of the phenomenological interdependence of history and objectivity in the edifice of ideality offers an attenuation of that traditional and metaphysically-rooted dichotomy and allows us to understand, in a way not confused by overweening ideas of absolutely pure concepts of history or objectivity, how it is that, through each other, they can appear to us and the (objective and historical) phenomena can appear to us as historical and objective. The aim is to build a full model of the architecture of ideal objectivity which Husserl devotes a lot of attention to sketching out, and which is not only the condition of possibility for geometry, but the inherent possibilities in experience and thought which makes that ideal perfection of it possible. I'll approach this project of elucidation in three sections— "Word made flesh", "Coherent and possible ideality", and "Writing across time".

The first section is concerned with the description of objectivity in the strongest phenomenological sense as first of all *intersubjectivity*, and starts with how for ideal objects which are freely invented in the imagination a community, specifically a linguistic community, is essential in order for intersubjective demonstration to be achieved. This dependence, and with it all of the interdependencies of the ideal, is clarified in its sense as not a factual dependence, but an ideal one, which is to say; dependence on the possibility *of*. And therefore the dependence of objectivity on its 'linguistic body' is always a dependence on the possibility of its incarnation, which explains why language belongs as a possibility to consciousness no matter what.

After this, the whole of ideality is discussed as a structure of interdependent possibilities, all of which must be possible in order for any one in particular to be possible, in the section "Coherent and possible ideality". This starts with the assertion that for objectivity mere language and community do not suffice without history, which raises once more the question of what kind of history is needed. Because as I have shown already it is neither the pure essence of history in the abstract, nor mere factual history, but the *a priori* of history—which as an idea is a *possibility*—which objectivity requires, it is possible to make sense of history in geometry and such as the development of a primordial possibility. I follow Derrida's argument that history, as well as the other essential coherence of repeatability, is already anticipated in the basic structure of intentionality to show that history is always part of the eidetic consciousness in the way it needs to be—as possibility.

Finally, in “Writing across time”, writing as the concrete condition of history as the persistence of the idea is explained as Husserl describes it and in terms of its possibility. Like community, even though writing is something concrete and factual in every instance, it is only in terms of its pure possibility that it is necessary in order for objectivity to be ‘achieved’. And this brings us to objectivity itself, because just as the other possibilities of ideality are necessary for objectivity, objectivity is in each case necessary for them. But just as with the rest, it is necessary as an idea—as possible. It is the idea of objectivity which is required for science. It is because objectivity is itself always an idea that the idea of the rest of the coherence is sufficient to attain it.

This explanation will conclude my elucidation in three chapters of the function and character of ideal history and establish the grounds for the subsequent ‘commentary and interpretation’ (see VP 75) on the phenomenology of history and its role in phenomenology at large through Derrida’s treatment thereof, first with a light touch in the *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry* and then somewhat more forcefully in *Voice and Phenomenon*, though in both cases undertaken with the utmost care and fidelity (which we know from his other writing Derrida never considered a straightforward comportment—in “Plato’s Pharmacy” Derrida concludes that the obedience to the father demands parricide).

An ideal history is expounded by Husserl which is meant not only to open up history to a phenomenological investigation independent of factual history, its uncertainties and limitations, but to explain the structure according to which facticity is possible. Contrary to the pure metaphysical concept of historicity as absolute flux, history as it is presented in experience is the objectified historical—and as a phenomenological science, the historical is exhausted by the experience of it, therefore ideal history does not distinguish between the historical science and the unfolding of events and historical moments itself; it is ideal in fundamentally the same way mathematics is, as Derrida puts it: “Its being is thoroughly transparent and exhausted by its phenomenality” (IOG 27), although it is the same way anything is as treated by phenomenology<sup>54</sup> This essence of history is necessary for history to be able to present itself to intuition, and thus to the science of phenomenology, but it offers advantages even from without the Husserlian orthodoxy, because of its rich resources for accounting for the way of existing of objective truths within history, without either abandoning truth to relativism or relying on an extra-

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<sup>54</sup> Husserl writes in the introduction to *Ideas I* that “phenomenology will become established here as a science of essence — as an “a priori” or, as we also say, an eidetic science” (Id I xxii)



historical and extra-worldly realm of truth. It is my conviction that in doing so Husserl presents the most ambitious possible account of historicity while respecting its limits.

At the same time Husserl avoids a further danger (or actually just a reappearance of the same danger), historical phenomenology is not merely a treatment of the historical, ahistorically, in terms of their present objectivity—history is not regarded merely insofar as it is stripped of its particularity and transformations and denatured as a static object. While historical phenomenology is irreducibly objective, it reveals for all objects the essentially historical way that they exist, and it is only on the basis of the essential historicity of objects that the transformations of historical variation in their (eidetic) core<sup>55</sup> can be thought. The adequate understanding of the entire inseparable edifice of ideality makes it necessary to understand history in its objectivity and objectivity in its historicity, and it also makes this possible.

The existence of the science of geometry as objective truth, just as the existence of any ideal object, is due to the support structures of reproducibility, language, history and community. It is by virtue of all of these existent structures—its infinite reproducibility in acts of consciousness, its “linguistic embodiment” (UG 161); its historical extension through time and across generations by being “capable of being passed on” (UG 167) and received; its belonging to *the* community, as understandable to all therein (see UG 162), not to mention transcendence—that ideal objects exist, and this lifeworldly coherence or *Zusammenhang* explains the existence of ideas without reducing them to their psychological presentation, inventing an otherworldly support for them or relying on any other kind of metaphysical substructure, in order to answer the *Origin*’s central question; “how does geometrical ideality (like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul, to its ideal objectivity?” (UG 161). The answer is: by being repeated, expressed in language, preserved in history, and available to the community for any one of whom it constitutes an object.

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<sup>55</sup> According to Carr, “the necessity of a historical introduction to philosophy” (Carr, *Problem 56*) derives from the historicity of consciousness—it is the historicity of consciousness, and not of objects, or even the objectified ego, that requires what he calls Husserl’s ‘historical reduction’ or ‘historical reflections’ (see Carr, *Problem 112–13*) in order to bring to account the historical particularity of the consciousness in which objects appear. This is no doubt true, but it is uncertain whether ideal history, which is inseparable from objectivity, can help with a pre-objective historical reflection.

In any case, historical reflection, contrary to Carr’s argument, is essential not primarily because of the historicity of consciousness, but because there is no fundamental understanding of the existence

These conditions suffice to create an object in the only sense that the term has meaning for Husserl—as intersubjectively available and the same for everyone—, just as an object or objective realm is necessary for those conditions to be possible themselves. Thus, the articulation of essential structures is easy to misunderstand—the structures are not articulated in order to distinguish one or more of them as independent, or to roll out a genealogy, but in order to explain their place within an interdependent network outside of which no one of them, least of all objectivity, the basis of meaning itself, could exist or have any meaning. The interdependence in the coherence of ideality is not unlike the interdependence of mental states, mental experiences and all mentalities in psychology, for which Husserl uses the same term in *Phenomenological Psychology*—‘*Zusammenhang*’, there translated as ‘nexus’—; “But psychology and consequently all socio-cultural sciences refer to the one *mental nexus* [*Zusammenhang*] *universally given by internal experience* [*innere Erfahrung*]. Internal experience gives no mere mutual externality; it knows no separation of parts consisting of self-sufficient elements.” (Husserl, *Phenomenological Psychology* 4–5; first German interpolation mine) Just as in the case of ideality, its ‘parts’ can be spoken of and identified, but not given independently and apart from one another.

### **a. Word made flesh**

The intimate relation between objectivity and the possibility of other subjects is natural to phenomenology as an eidetic science, as David Carr notes; it is “[in a sense] taken into account by the very eidetic approach of phenomenology” (Carr, *Problem* 87). This is due to transcendental phenomenology’s respect for the appearance as fully ‘objective’—that is, as available to others—of intentional objects in principle, notwithstanding factual obstacles which may preclude their convenience in certain circumstances. In book five of the *Cartesian Meditations*, the interdependence of objectivity and community is established explicitly, and community is the ideal means of circumventing such obstacles. Community, in the sense of the possibility of intersubjectivity itself, establishes objectivity in the strongest sense in which the term is phenomenologically meaningful—“transcendental intersubjectivity has an *intersubjective* sphere of ownness, in which it constitutes the objective

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of ideas, on which the whole of phenomenology rests, without understanding the historicity of those ideas as ideal objects.

world” (CM 107)—it is a phenomenological object’s appearance as available to the perception of others that constitutes it as objective; “there occurs a *universal super-addition of sense to my primordial world*, whereby the latter becomes the *appearance* ‘of’ a determinate ‘Objective’ world, as the identical world for everyone, myself included.” (CM 107).

Objectivity is the *terra firma* of experience, and philosophy and science rightly pursue it, but overshoot the target when they seek a higher standard than universal availability to all subjects—truly it is just such intersubjective recognition, no more and no less, that we seek in order to confirm the fleeting, the out of the ordinary, the dubious, or the illusory. A more profound metaphysical certainty is not only unattainable, but superfluous to our understanding of the world. Consider the burning need for just such objective determination that descends upon reading a fantastical story in which something incredible has happened to the protagonist. The reader is unsettled not so much by the extraordinariness of whatever occurred as by the uncertainty of whether the others will confirm it and its strangeness. She reads on feverishly to determine what kind of experience she has been presented with, because, more than whatever abominable snowman or anthropomorphic nose has appeared, or what kind of time travel miracle has occurred, the ambiguity between an objective fact and something which is an exception from the objective is unsettling in the most fundamental way. Is she presented with the unverified private experience of Harvey the friendly six-foot tall rabbit pooka, or the objectively verified but extraordinary nose/civil servant of Nikolai Gogol’s story? Next to the undecidedness between objectivity and the lapses thereof which is only the province of dreams, fiction and madness, whatever concrete form the suspension or possible suspension of objectivity has taken is utterly banal, no matter how many tentacles it has. It is a privileged moment in a narrative and one which can never last long; the tension begs to be resolved. Either objectivity or illusion must reign. The reason the film *Harvey* is so exciting and fun is that it manages to sustain this undecidedness—that no one other than Jimmy Stewart’s Elwood P. Dowd can see or hear Harvey isn’t enough for us to confirm his non-existence.

The agreement of only one other subject is enough to provide the satisfaction of obtaining objectivity, which can be intense even in quotidian and even petty circumstances. Today, at a coffee ‘cupping’ or tasting my friend mentioned notes of chocolate and blueberry and right away I seemed to taste the same flavours. But such flavours are so evanescent—disappearing as soon as they appear like the notes of a melody as Husserl describes in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*—they are impossible to detect

and to interrogate or inspect at the same time. And then, the power of suggestion is so strong in comparison to a city-dweller's underdeveloped sense of smell. These are the reasons we're content to call wine or coffee tasting—indeed, taste in general—*subjective* in the common, non-phenomenological sense of the term as something which has a subjective part only. But of course it is not! The coffee is an object that I and anyone else can experience, and the taste belongs to that object as part of its essence. The difficulty is determining that taste, which is subtle and protean. But to call it subjective as though that were all there was of it is to give up precipitately. Connoisseurs are those who refuse to give up the quest for objectivity, indeed, for communication.

I continued to 'cup' my coffee and continued to taste notes of blueberry and chocolate (more so than any of the notes others in the group mentioned), but also started to notice a very distinctive combination of those flavours that reminded me of something specific. As protean as flavours and odours can be, they yet insist themselves with such clarity. Proust explored this, and its relation to memory, with the taste of madeleines dipped in tea. Proteus could eventually be made to return to his own form by being held onto tight, but the impressions of taste and smell seem to be changed by the effort of holding onto them, the same way Proteus did at first. Melodies too can have this effect. Suddenly, I recognised it and alluded out loud to the Lindt blueberry chocolate bar that it reminded me of so distinctly, and because my friend knew the chocolate he immediately and enthusiastically agreed. The satisfaction I felt in sharing this experience was immense, because it was the satisfaction of confirming in communication the objectivity which always belonged to my experience as a possibility, but which belonged to it in the form of a possibility, as a tension. It did not make it any more objective, because the objectivity was already there in the possibility of my friend's or some other person's experience of it, but allowed me to satisfy my own psychological doubts. Similarly, it is no impediment to the objectivity of that 'note' of blueberry and chocolate that none of the other members of the community seemed to recognise it, just as it would not have made it any less objective if not even one other person agreed with me. Perhaps they had never had the fortune to taste Lindt's blueberry chocolate bar, which would provide a sufficient obstacle to their experience of that flavour; or perhaps different flavours, also objectively belonging to the coffee, resonated and were experienced more forcefully by the others. 'Bergamot', 'citrus', and so on they announced, but for me it was Lindt blueberry chocolate all the way.

It is in the *Origin* that Husserl explains how objectivity is attained concretely not due to an indeterminate universality of 'everyone', but on the basis of linguistic

community—though never on the basis of ‘a’ particular community; as Derrida points out, it is merely the pure possibility of any given linguistic community that is presupposed. Even though this is an indeterminate necessity of community *as such* and is never tied to a community in particular, it is nevertheless not reducible to intersubjectivity in general—what is crucial is that the intersubjective relation have this form of a shared community. Only community can make the sharing of an object in common possible;

In this sense civilization is, for every man whose we-horizon it is, a community of those who can reciprocally express themselves, normally, in a fully understandable fashion; and within this community everyone can talk about what is within the surrounding world of his civilization as objectively existing.

(UG 162)

Objectivity lights up our world, runs Husserl’s account, ‘as soon as’ we find ourselves participating in “a community of empathy and language” (UG 163), or in fact merely enjoy the possibility of such a community, in which abides a certain possibility of ‘coaccomplishment’ of shared objects themselves in addition to the simultaneous understanding *that they are shared*; that they can (at least in principle) be given to the consciousness of all ‘members’ of the community;

In this full understanding of what is produced by the other, as in the case of recollection, a present coaccomplishment on one's own part of the presentified activity necessarily takes place; but at the same time there is also the self-evident consciousness of the identity of the mental structure in the productions of both the receiver of the communication and the communicator; and this occurs reciprocally. (UG 163)

This is the case for the ‘properly’ ideal object insofar as it is an *identical mental structure* which must be understood as belonging identically to the other, just as it is for ‘real’ objects in the case of which the other’s ‘accomplishment’ will vary on the basis of her own perspective.<sup>56</sup> In fact, a community with common language is necessary in order to share ideal objectivity, whereas the gaze of a foreigner or stranger is sufficient to accomplish the objectivity of objects in the material world, along the empathic (*Einfühlung*) lines already presented in the fifth meditation, and it is only objects which are exact ideas that are capable of producing the consciousness of an identical structure in the psyche of the other

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<sup>56</sup> Derrida describes this difference perfectly; “An ideal object is an object whose monstration can be indefinitely repeated, whose presence in the *Zeigen* is indefinitely reiterable precisely because, freed from all mundane spatiality, it is a pure noema which I can express without having, at least in appearance, to pass through the world.” (VP 64)

(indeed of any other in the community).<sup>57</sup> This is why the exact idea is so important, and how it opens up a new potential for civilisation, as Husserl passionately albeit worryingly declaimed in the *Vienna Lecture*. The importance of the idea, philosophy and civilisation is the anxious plea at the heart of all of the writings surrounding the *Crisis*, and in part because, whatever criticisms can and should be held against it, it makes an empathic communication possible that is not there otherwise. That is because the dependence between community and objectivity is mutual. This is so for real objects; it is as a subject who intends objects and an objective world that she shares or can share with me that other subjects and the community of subjects are, as subjects, given to me. This is why even for material objects the possibility of language is necessary—without the possibility of communicating about it in a language there is no objectivity.

In its turn, the shared objective world is essential for the intersubjective sphere which constitutes it, because it is in their having a world that other subjects are themselves constituted *as subjects*: as Carr emphasises “he is thus constituted as having ‘his own’ world just as I do” (Carr, *Problem* 96) And it is even more the case for the deeper kind of empathy made possible on the basis of an ideal object which can and must be shared by involving identical subjective acts; “what is self-evident turns up as the same in the consciousness of the other.” (UG 163)

Since we can imagine real objects which are given to us in a fully intersubjective way without any factual involvement of language, and on the basis of an intersubjective ‘meeting’ which occurs among individuals who do not seem to belong to a shared linguistic community, it would seem that there is a kind of objectivity based on a common world of experience that is prior to all of the other parts of the edifice of ideality, and that they are therefore not equiprimordial. Does the possibility of meeting a stranger’s gaze not, as Sartre explains, indicate a fully intersubjective objectivity which precedes language, but also history and ideality itself? Does it not presuppose that we are able to attain some kind of fundamental objectivity that is therefore the basis of subjectivity and the prior and necessary condition of all ideal content? This would perhaps indeed be the case if eidetic

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<sup>57</sup> However, this factual difference is beside the point as far as the existence of the ideal object goes—whether it is an object the essence of which has the identity of a geometrical theorem or one which has the equally identical indeterminateness of an area of Nile floodplain, the object exists only insofar as there belongs to it the possibility of ‘coaccomplishment’ by others and by a whole community, just as for both the mere possibility of such is sufficient so long as all the other ideal possibilities are also ‘there’. The identity of the so-called ‘ideal object proper’ consists in the

objectification were not necessary for any object to be given to consciousness in the first place; were it not only as ideal that consciousness is able to constitute any object; and therefore were it not the case that the possibility of being communicated in language already essentially belongs to the object as such. But without eidetic reduction, the objectivity of the object could only be made sense of in metaphysical realist terms.

The equiprimordiality of ideal possibilities that I presume lends a different slant to Husserl's ostensive question in the *Origin*: "how does geometrical ideality (like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor's soul, to its ideal objectivity?" (UG 161) The question re-presents itself as retrospective; it is the same question, but now enquiring after the way in which an intrasubjective origin can be conceived, rather than enquiring after the way in which the passage from intrasubjectivity to intersubjectivity could have been blazed. How can the object ever come to be constituted within the psychic life of the individual when its coming to be depends on a coherence of intersubjective relations? If the object is originally intrasubjective—as both the particular theory of geometry's invention and the intrasubjective origin and destination of all indubitable evidence in general demand—then it must get started before and independently of these intersubjective faculties. At least, this is the 'story' we would have to expect from an account of objectivity on the basis of factually existing psychical and social faculties. Speaking as Husserl is of ideal possibilities, no such linear progression is necessary. The intrasubjective origin of geometrical objects is entirely consistent with the already possible intersubjectivity on which it indeed depends.

The object is constituted within consciousness at the 'moment' in which it becomes an idea, and only ever becomes so according to the essences which determine both the activity of consciousness and the essence of the objects which it can intend; "In the essence of the mental process itself lies not only that it is consciousness but also whereof it is consciousness, and in which determinate or indeterminate sense it is that." (Id I 74). The synthesising activity of consciousness is responsible for any presentation or intuition; "If consciousness were not a referring consciousness, possessing the capacity, the 'ability' (*Vermögen*) to bring the empty, indirect, indefinite 'intended' to fulfillment, then it would not have any intentionally given object." (Held, "Method" 14) That is, the raw perceptions available to consciousness are never sufficient for the derivation of an object; it is not

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absolute adequacy of any experience of it by dint of its exactly determined identity. It is not due to any existential difference.

enough for perceptions, in Held's metaphor, to wash ashore like flotsam (or jetsam). Consciousness is not like a beach waiting to receive whatever washes up on it, it must seek out and acquire objects according to their essences; this, again, is why Held emphasises the description of consciousness as 'intentional' (see Held, "Method" 14). The essential structures determine consciousness' activity from the start, notwithstanding the "vivid self-evidence" (UG 163) of originary immediacy which fades away without offering any lasting construction, and which looks like something which is present to consciousness but prior to the stability of an *eidos*—the repeatability of an idea already belongs to such originary formations even as they fade away, which is Husserl's whole point in mentioning them as the passivity of what has faded away and finally disappeared but remains the basis for a possible 'reawakening' (see UG 163). At the moment of a first consciousness of an object the possibility of being re-presented in consciousness and expressed in language already belongs to it, without which there can be no idea and no consciousness. Originary intrasubjective constitution of an ideal object is possible because it is only the pure possibility of language, a community of empathy, history, even of repetition, that is necessary, not their effective, factual coming-to-bear or into play. The ideality of the object is nothing but the possibility of this *coherence* of various ideal structures.<sup>58</sup>

Repeatability makes the objectifying structure of consciousness possible by ensuring the self-identity of the idea it intends. Repeatability is already necessary in order for the object, the thing which can be repeated, to exist at all. The possibility of linguistic expression is necessary in order to explain the possibility of the object's mutual recognition in an intersubjective community (a possibility which particular objects, according to their type and circumstance may or may not possess due to the presence of obstacles or their insufficient exactitude, but which belongs to objects in general as such),<sup>59</sup> and not because of the empirical effectiveness which constitutes its outward function, an effectiveness

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<sup>58</sup> James C. Morrison points out, the questions of the intrasubjective origin of the idea of geometry is twinned with the question of its coming-to-be objective: "As Husserl's argument unfolds, however it becomes clear that it is not merely the first evidence that was actively produced but the idealities or objectivities themselves" (Morrison "Husserl's 'Crisis': Reflections on the Relationship of Philosophy and History" 327)

<sup>59</sup> This connection between originary evidence, essence and language may not be explicitly made by Husserl, but it should be—without eidetic cognition, there is no evidence, and while language is not materially necessary for ideal objectivity it is necessary for ideal objectivity as a possibility already belonging to it. Language is necessary, therefore, in the full eidetic sense of Husserl's entire reflection on objectivity—as a possibility.



which is merely ancillary with regards to its pure essence—this is one of Derrida most incisive findings in *Voice and Phenomenon*;

“Thus all of what constitutes the actuality of what is uttered, the physical incarnation of the *Bedeutung*, the body of speech, which in its ideality belongs to an empirically determinate language, is, if not outside discourse, at least foreign to expressivity as such, to this pure intention without which no discourse would be possible.” (VP 28–29)

The essential interiority of language is a central preoccupation for Derrida in *Voice and Phenomenon*, and a principal target of his criticism. It should be obvious from the most fundamentally transcendental priorities of phenomenology that it is the object of consciousness (*Bewußtseinsobjekte*), ideally existing and therefore not contingent on either material or psychological factual being, which is the basis for any ideality, thus for repeatability and language but also for community and finally for history. In all of his enquiries it is impossible to understand the coherence of Husserl’s project without following his attention to the priority of intentionality as the basis of the phenomenological approach.

Communication is essential in this edifice from the start as the activity which can constitute a “community of monads” (CM 107), but the mechanism of communication—language—is only thematised in this capacity in the *Origin*.<sup>60</sup> Language is what makes community as such and in whatever form possible; “One is conscious of civilization from the start as an immediate and mediate linguistic community.” (UG 162) Husserl is able to assume the role language plays in communication without analysing it up until the writing of the *Origin* perhaps because it is only there, with the critique, that it becomes necessary to thematise the particular sphere of reality that language, and history, constitute, just as it became necessary to thematise intersubjectivity only in the fifth cartesian meditation, even though it was already assumed by the account of objectivity offered as early as *Ideas I*. The reality given to us in language and history is not a derivative one, as Carr attests; “the ‘sedimented prominences’ that form the background of my encounter with the world are in large measure the ‘deposits’ not of original experiences but of communication” (Carr, *Problem* 109)—and in the *Origin of Geometry* it at long last gets its due.

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<sup>60</sup> I mean to draw a distinction here between the role of language in communication and the construction of objectivity as it is described in the *Origin* and the abstract discourse on “Expression and meaning” in the first investigation (See LU 181–233).

Language is the ‘living body’ (*Leib*) of the ideal object in which it is constituted as an object, freed from its confinement to the psychic interiority of its inventor’s originary thought—“the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul” (UG 161)—and made into an *objective* idea, available to anyone, as is the case for instance with geometry; “geometrical existence is not psychic existence; it does not exist as something personal within the personal sphere of consciousness; it is the existence of what is objectively there for ‘everyone’ (for actual and possible geometers, or those who understand geometry)” (UG 160).<sup>61</sup> Geometry, from its origin, is objective—and anything which is ideal is objective only because it is (or rather, can be) made available to all in language.

Language is thus brought into the originary moment of ideality and objectivity themselves—it is not a form into which the idea is transformed once it has already been constituted, but is equiprimordial with the idea and its objectivity and constitutive of it, as Derrida emphasises;

Whether geometry can be spoken about is not, then, the extrinsic and accidental possibility of a fall into the body of speech or of a slip into a historical movement. Speech is no longer the expression (*Äusserung*) of what, without it, would *already* be an object: caught again in its primordial purity, speech *constitutes* the object and is a concrete juridical condition of truth.

(IOG 77)<sup>62</sup>

The objectivity of the idea means just the same thing that objectivity means for anything else—that it *is*, first of all, and that its existence is not, at least in principle, private, but the possibility belongs to it of being experienced by any other subject. The difference in the objectivity of the idea is that it does not present itself to the subject with its own materiality, but borrows the materiality of language, taking on a “linguistic living body [*Sprachleib*]” (UG 161). Derrida makes a very odd translation choice when he adopts this term, calling it “linguistic flesh” (IOG 76), in French “*sa chair linguistique*” (l’Origine 69). In other places, Derrida emphasises Husserl’s distinction between the terms *Leib* and *Körper* (see IOG 97 and others), but here Derrida not only uses a term, “*chair*”, to translate “*Leib*” which is emphatically closer to the sense of *Körper*, he does so in a context in which Husserl’s distinction is implicitly at issue. Nevertheless, his observation is, as ever, acute;

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<sup>61</sup> See also UG 161: “objective structure which, e.g., as geometrical concept or state of affairs, is in fact present as understandable by all and is valid, already in its linguistic expression as geometrical speech, as geometrical proposition, for all the future in its geometrical sense”

<sup>62</sup> It is puzzling that Derrida calls this liberation through language and ‘historical incarnation’ ‘paradoxical’. If it is a paradox, it is exceedingly easy to resolve once we have taken into account the eidetics of history and language and the reduction of factuality.

this *Sprachleib*, Derrida writes, “would be *absolutely bound to the psychological life of a factual individual*, to that of a factual community, indeed to a particular moment of that life” (IOG 77). Derrida describes what he calls the paradoxical emancipation of the idea through its incarnation with the most transparent delight, remarking on ‘our’ possible “surprise” (*surprendre* and *étonner*) repeatedly, at its ingenuity. This liberation is the difference between the ‘psychic object’ the existence of which is in the intrasubjective, and is thus ‘bound’ in the way Derrida describes (see IOG fn71), and the (relative) ‘freedom’ of an ideal object which has come to be through a kind of incarnation in language. However, the meaning of this ‘liberation’ is easily misunderstood in a couple of ways—first, language is, as we have seen, not a late addition which transforms a ‘psychic object’ into an ideal one, nor is there any ontological distinction between two ‘types’ of objects; rather, all objects are already objective, in part by virtue of being *capable*, in the absence of any obstacles or vague indeterminacies, of acquiring such a *Sprachleib*, and the freedom of the ideal object from its bondage to an intrapsychical existence is just that; not the addition of a body but the elimination of its qualification, of a hitherto necessary qualification which had determined its sense as essentially peculiar to that individual subjectivity. Second, an object liberated in this way, by being capable of being expressed in language, can yet be a ‘bound ideality’ and not a free one, as I explained at length in chapter two, since it is of course possible to give expression to objects the meaning of which are bound to a particular ideal context.

## ***b. Coherent ideal possibilities***

As important as language is in providing the ideal object with its ‘linguistic body’ it is not the only possibility essential to the idea’s constitution. In this section I will explain the function of history within the coherence of ideality. The place of history therein is the reason for this treatment of Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry* and to a great extent the point of that text as well. I began this thesis with a preparation of the reason crisis is essentially historical—why the devastation of science must be understood in terms of its own historical development and the teleology which orients it. This explained the way that the problem of history emerged for Husserl, and how the critique of science shaped his efforts to provide a phenomenological account of history. Next I set out the way in which a history that is ideal is demanded and prepared by the eidetic orientation of phenomenological science, why it is eidetic history alone which can ground science, and what ideal history can mean as distinct from ‘factual history’. All of this makes evident that history is not an independent phenomenon and cannot profitably be understood purely with regards to its own essence. History, far from denoting the pure flux of historical change, has shown itself to be for the most part concerned with change’s conditions of possibility. It is rather what makes it possible for certain historical things to stand outside of time and pure flux. It is history as an *ekstasis* in perhaps the converse of Heidegger’s use of the word; a standing outside of time that makes it possible to serve as the basis of any change, as the standing outside of change which is the only way any discourse or identification of change is possible. Lawlor captures this “‘paradoxical historicity’ (LOG 48/59)” (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl; The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* 110) of truth concisely; “it seems to have broken with all empirical content of real history and yet it seems to be irreducibly connected to history since it is the only means by which real history has continuity.” (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 110)

Historicity belongs to all essences and must be understood in terms of the whole coherence that make any ideality, hence any consciousness, possible. That history depends upon the other parts of this coherence is what Husserl is concerned with showing in the *Origin*, perhaps more so than the character of history itself, even as one of these parts. History is just as much dependent upon language, objectivity and community as they are on each other—but this interdependence is in a sense *uncharacteristic* for history since it is these

other idealities which necessitate an accommodation of the *atemporal* within history—at the very heart of history, since there can be no history without them. The existence of history requires other idealities whose stability makes possible the pure essence of history. In this section I will explain how history is only possible on the basis of the other idealities, and also how history is essential to ideal objectivity.

There are two shapes that the considerations of history take in the *Origin*—there is the ultimate *Rückfrage* and the discussion of reactivation on the one hand and, what may appear to be a separate consideration, the much more detailed and technically advanced treatment of the conditions for the persistence and invulnerability of ideas. However, it is only on the basis of the historical structure of ideas that any historical enquiry is possible. Ideal history as a project encompasses the whole—the structure of history that makes inquiry possible and the historical inquiry which not only illuminates the structure, but brings it into being as a retrospectively determined essential condition of any present experience.

Perhaps it is in part for this reason that Husserl employs the more vague term ‘Tradition’ (*Tradition*) when first presenting the importance of the science as a protection against perdure,<sup>63</sup> and that which has been saved from perdurance itself, eschewing for a moment the clarity of the distinction his language makes possible between ‘*Geschichte*’, which concerns actually past historical factuality, and ‘*Historie*’, which concerns its recounting or study, as if he would’ve preferred the equivocity of French’s ‘*histoire*’ or English’s ‘history’ celebrated by Jacques Ranciere in *The Names of History*. It’s a distinction he never really seems to make much of, anyway.<sup>64</sup> For the most part, however, Husserl’s

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<sup>63</sup> See UG 158

<sup>64</sup> Derrida mentions this, too. See IOG 27*fn*. Heidegger had likewise insisted on the ontological contiguity between the historical narration or study and its historical object, accusing ‘*Historie*’ of having neglected ‘*Geschichte*’ in its preoccupation with the method and certainty of its own procedures: “Thus the basic phenomenon of history [*Geschichte*], which is prior to any possible thematizing by historiology [*Historie*] and underlies it, has been irretrievably put aside.” (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 427; German interpolations from Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 375) Heidegger demanded a renewed investigation of the structures of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) themselves and its rootedness in temporality; *Geschichtlichkeit* is a turn from the critical study of history as a secondary account (like factual history) to the investigation of the existential historicity of modes of being themselves—“the existential-ontological constitution of historicity” (Heidegger, *Being* 428; Heidegger, *Sein* 376)—which makes such secondary accounts and inquiries possible. Their common-ground is itself no historical contingency—both ideal history and ontological *Geschichtlichkeit* denote the historicity of existence (at least of certain kinds of existence) and the existence of any given history without which no history is possible. They show that the limits of history are contiguous with its existence, and also that no investigation which traverses those limits is properly historical or relevant to history. In other words, they deny the distinction between

concern with history permeates the text, encompasses its problem and yet remains unnamed—the entire question of the origin of the ideal object is a question as to the structure of history. Repeatability for the individual and intersubjective availability to the entire community (and hence its communicability between them) are both necessary for ideal objectivity, but it is its persistence and invulnerability to change—its fundamental historicity—which finally, and most problematically, makes it objective in every sense that is phenomenologically—one might even say ‘logically’—meaningful, and without it there can be no sense to mathematical truth or to any ideality at all.

The core of Husserl’s explanation of how the ideal object comes into being, and particularly how it comes to enjoy the peculiar power of historical endurance is laid out in a few brief pages (UG 162–164), although the explanation of this development concerns most of the rest of the text. The basis of history is virtually already in place once the individual, using his own capacity for *recollection*, has extended the idea beyond the instant of its invention (“the original being-itself-there, in the immediacy [*Aktualität*] of its first production” [UG 163]) in which that event occurs. Essentially, it is in place even earlier with the potential for repetition which belongs to the idea in that first production. As Derrida will point out, there is already for Husserl an essential primordial intersubjectivity in the “going out from self-to-self” (IOG 150) of intentionality, which is “the root of historicity” (IOG 150) With this capacity, the idea is already endowed with the ‘repeatability’ which in principle frees it from an absolutely unique and isolated moment and extends it through time—“the capacity for repetition at will with the self-evidence of the identity (coincidence of identity) of the structure throughout the chain of repetitions” (UG 163)—but in essence brings it into existence in the first place. The *persistence* which history makes possible through community, language and finally writing seems almost a technicality. However, these modifications are all crucial, since their possibility is already essential to any internal, egoic recollection or reactivation<sup>65</sup>, and hence to any egoic originary production whatsoever. It is the possibility of these preserving and disseminating idealities which makes intentionality their root.

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epistemic access to the historical and historical existence that warrants the emphasis on the epistemic problem that has preoccupied most so-called theoretical thinking about history (de Certeau, Ranciere, Foucault) and enables the postulation of an epistemic relation to an existentially absent past; a contradictory temporality that masquerades as complex systemic clarity.

<sup>65</sup> Derrida discusses the dependence of repetition on the sign in *Voice and Phenomenon*.

The ‘next’ things after objectivity in the limited (and, indeed, dependent and deficient) sense of ‘identity’ is established in repeatability are “the function of empathy and fellow mankind as a community of empathy and of language” (UG 163) in which the ‘full’ sense of objectivity is ‘realised’—objectivity as the availability in principle to everyone. Husserl is writing here about the *function* of empathy, etcetera, indicating that it is no particular empathetic act or relation which makes this full(er) sense of objectivity possible—it is the possibility of empathy as such which is at issue here. As soon as there is the possibility of a community of empathy and language, the object is already attained in its full, intersubjective sense (though only because as soon as there is community and language there is history itself). Although Husserl sometimes employs the language of development and progression, as though there were a chronological series from original evidence to repetition to communication to preservation (See UG 162–63)—a genesis of the development of ideal objectivity—there is never anything, no phenomenological object or act, without all the resources of ideality already there. This spontaneous and all-at-once flourishing is possible because phenomenality requires only the possibility of the whole coherence. What is essential is not for communication to actually occur in order for the idea to be preserved. Though that may indeed be necessary for factual persistence of the given idea, such factual persistence is not what constitutes the idea as an ideal object, or its permanence. The existence of the ideal object, a possibility itself, is determined only and sufficiently by the pure possibility of repeatability, community and the rest. Because all of the conditions for ideality are possibilities, there neither can nor need be a linear acquisition of each of them one at a time. Ideality exists as an interdependent structure which comes into being spontaneously—not one of these is already there as a possibility, but all of them are.

The impossibility of different stages of objectivity is the reason there are not actually more and less objective objects or ‘full’ objects and somehow not quite full objects—the intersubjectively available object is not ‘full’ in comparison to a limited or partial object which belongs merely to the individual, rather, as I explained in the previous section—ideal objectivity is the way of being of all objects whatever. It is only on the basis of an already inherent potential for being communicated and preserved that the most factually basic trait of objectivity—original evidence—can exist. The object which is not communicable or permanent is distinguished not because it is an intermediate ‘stage’ in a development, but because of a modification to its own ideal objectivity—a modification in its essence which is necessary for its sense, as I explained previously with the example of

Proust's Madeleines. The special state of the simply-put 'ideal object' which belongs to ideal science such as mathematics and geometry, the 'free ideality', is special not because it alone is permanent, but because it alone is permanent in an unqualified sense.

The difficulty of understanding the interrelation and complexity of ideality with its various 'parts' is what dictates Husserl's periodic description of the coherence as though it were a progressive stage-by-stage development. If we speak of the capacity for communication as an acquisition it is possible to understand how by way of it "The productions can reproduce their likenesses from person to person, and in the chain of the understanding of these repetitions what is self-evident turns up as the same in the consciousness of the other." (UG 163) This can be understood as something made possible in the coherence by 'communication' which is not possible by way of 'repeatability' alone, even though there is no *repeatability alone*. If there *were* repeatability alone, as in a developmental stage-based model, then it would not have the capacities required by full objectivity which are provided by communication. The object is available (without qualification) in its full, intersubjective sense, to anyone to whom it can be communicated. Nevertheless, in order to understand the function of these different non-separable parts, it is helpful to talk about them as though their factual effect were what is at hand.

This is where *history* as an ideal function comes in—the basis for the property of unqualified (in, of course, any meaningful, phenomenological sense) permanence—without which the ideal object is not realised in its full essence. Communication establishes the intersubjective availability of the object, but only among the particular 'community of empathy and of language' in which it is launched. This is the case even though it is the pure possibility of language as such that is necessary, and not any particular language, because the possibility of language is essentially the possibility of *some* particular language (and the same stands for the possibility of community). That is to say that, considered in itself, abstracted from the *a priori* of history with which it is essentially always united anyway, communication is localised—it depends on the survival of a given community, or reasonably non-disruptive modifications thereof, capable of maintaining the object through internal communication. In Husserl's words; "What is lacking is the persisting existence of the "ideal objects" even during periods in which the inventor and his fellows are no longer wakefully so related or even are no longer alive." (UG 164) We must remember that this abstraction of community without history is a fiction—the possibility of such a thing is



not apparent. There are thus no examples we could give of such a state, no consequences to be drawn with relevance to factual circumstances. Historicism is not due to an existential difference of this sort—historically specific meanings are simply the result of the historical specificity of those meanings, not to a different way of existing. It is not because of the regional particularity of the very means of its objectification that an object at this stage lacks the sense of unqualified permanence and universality which is essential to objectivity, leaving it vulnerable to the kind of loss and change that introduces the possibility of a community for which it does not appear as an objective idea, thus leaving it open to the possibility of relativism.

### ***c. Writing across time***

It is as what contributes this permanence that Husserl introduces writing; the possibility of writing is what makes something *historical*, in the sense of standing outside of a particular time.<sup>66</sup> The material possibility of the *a priori* of history; writing effects a ‘sedimentation’ of the sensibly experienceable sign on which the ideal signification depends. The sign which, as a verbal sign, had been the condition for the liberation from its origin within the individual psyche, its expansion to the intersubjective realm, here once again, now as a written sign, is the condition for its expansion beyond the community to which the originating genius can address himself, simply because in being written down the sign is preserved and made independent of the temporal limitations of the *viva voce*; “The important function of written, documenting linguistic expression is that it makes communications possible without immediate or mediate personal address; it is, so to speak, communication become virtual.” (UG 164) *Made virtual*, Husserl claims, because communication can be effected, in a virtual sense, even during periods in which no signifying or attention is occurring, that is, even while no writer is actively writing and no reader is actively reading, the sign still contains within its ‘corporeality’ the potential for such *reactivation*. The function of writing is really quite straightforward, though the ideals of permanence and objectivity can obscure it; the object sedimented in writing lies dormant, preserved by the solidity of its material expression, able to be reactivated at any time, by anyone. This is permanence and universality in contrast to the dependence on ‘immediate or mediate personal address’ necessary in order for verbal language to make its objects intersubjectively valid. Through ‘personal address’, verbal communication must maintain an uninterrupted chain of signification from subject to subject, and onwards. Writing, on the other hand, allows the object to persist “even during periods in which the inventor and his fellows are no longer wakefully so related or even are no longer alive” (UG 164); it frees the object from the temporal and regional limitations of verbal signification by putting the signification into a form which can traverse continents (allowing communication between those who are far too distant to speak to one-another); and ages (allowing preservation in

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<sup>66</sup> This theme is of immense importance for Derrida in his treatment of Husserl, as well as in the development of his own mature philosophy. The theme of writing has been the focus of extensive scholarly attention, notably Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, and Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*.

archives without the intercession of the sensible experience and reception thereof by any living subject), practically freeing it from any qualification of its universality as would be necessary if it were only available to certain temporally or geographically specific communities. As Derrida remarks; "By absolutely virtualizing dialogue, writing creates a kind of autonomous transcendental field from which every present subject can be absent." (IOG 88) This 'autonomous transcendental field', far from referring to an impossible kind of anomaly is (as a 'subjectless transcendental field') invoked by Jean Hyppolite as the condition of possibility of transcendental subjectivity as such, to paraphrase Derrida (see IOG 88). By freeing its object from the necessity of intersubjective continuity of transmission in speech and the collective identity ineluctable in the "community of speaking subjects" (IOG 88) without which there can be no speech, writing bestows on its object the independence from every particular subject.

Even enduring oral traditions, for the very reason that they are 'traditions', do not possess this power. Oral preservation requires exactly that continuity of "immediate or mediate personal address" (UG 164) and maintenance as an uninterrupted tradition. There is no possibility of the tradition passing beyond the 'community', because in any meaningful sense of the word the only people to whom the tradition could be passed would belong to a community already. And yet, writing also requires some kind of communality insofar as the legibility of its marks must be maintained.

But is writing really necessary for this achievement? Is this anonymity not already a feature of the object in its intersubjective availability? Is Hyppolite not right in making the subjectless transcendental field the condition of any transcendental phenomenology? Certainly, but this does not mean that writing, or to remain exact; the pure possibility of writing, is an extrinsic and secondary technology. On the contrary, it indicates that writing is already essential to the most fundamental transcendental subjectivity, to the formation of any ideal object, and to "absolute Objectivity" (IOG 88). As Derrida maintains: "a subjectless transcendental field is one of the 'conditions' of transcendental subjectivity" (IOG 88), and writing is "the *sine qua non* condition of Objectivity's internal completion" (IOG 89).

This temporal freedom granted in writing, so to speak, is not absolute freedom from any temporal particularity or other condition whatsoever. If the ideal object was free in such an absolute way (which would only be possible, as Derrida remarks, by positing either "a 'scarcely altered' conventional platonism" (IOG 42) or a 'hidden history' of the type implied in an idealism which removes the origin and existence of such ideas to a world

*beyond* or a history *before*)<sup>67</sup> they would in no way be historical. I have exhaustively shown that history in the phenomenological sense is predicated on various continuities, not least of which is the continuity of community. We have already seen that community is necessary for objectivity of the ideal type which is the only one of concern to Husserl, and community is just as much a necessity for writing as it is for verbal communication. At the very least, a linguistic community is necessary in order to maintain the legibility of written signs, but Husserl also specifies a univocity in the case of pure or unqualified ideal objects which denotes a community free of ambiguation. Thus, even if writing frees the object from continuity of linguistic expression, it does not free it from the necessity of a continuity of linguistic community. To put it simply, the ideal object's persistence in writing depends on the persistence of a community for whom the writing remains legible. Is a sense of permanence which is dependent on community strong enough to account for objectivity in any and all phenomenologically meaningful senses?

The sense of permanence demanded by objectivity understood in the full phenomenological sense does not, like all of the other essential characteristics of objectivity, make any reference positive or otherwise to being which transcends the possibility of any experience thereof. Or to put it in positive terms—the phenomenological object will be one which may be intuited by anyone at all, given the opportunity. There is never any expectation—nonsensical in phenomenological terms—that the object also exist independently of the possibility of any intuition thereof. So, the demands for full eternality put on the object are satisfied so long as for anyone at any time the object can be intended. There is of course nothing about objectivity which requires that anyone can intuit the object in fact—rather, the possibility of obstacles to its intuition belong to an object as such. There is always the possibility that no lion will be intuited by me as a “flesh and blood lion” (IOG 71), as Derrida puts it, or even that I or some other actual subject had never been made familiar with the sense of ‘lion’ due to the contingency of the language I know or the community to which I belong (or even a particularly remarkable lapse in my education within a language which nevertheless includes the idea of the lion), if I just happen never to have the opportunity to see or hear or in any other way obtain an impression of any lion, or on the other hand if I just happened never to have intended the object expressed by the word ‘lion’—but in no sense does it thereby cease to be an object.

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<sup>67</sup> The presupposition of a world or domain from which ideas come or in which they dwell, but which is itself hidden from view and out into which our enquiries cannot trespass is the important difference between Husserl and a Kantian ‘intra-worldly’ history which Derrida discussed in detail (see IOG 38-42)

Its objectivity only means that given the opportunity and the absence of all obstacles anyone is able to intuit it. Even more so—the pure ideal object of mathematics can readily be concealed from me if I do not have the training—that is, if I have not learned “the language of mathematics” (Galileo, “Assayer” 237–38), in Galileo’s words,—necessary in order to conceive it. But it is not any less an object and fully objective for that—in fact, its objectivity presupposes that it is not in fact given to everyone—and in just the same way entire cultures or epochs can come and go without any factual intention of particular objects, especially if they do not possess the particular language necessary in order to intend such an object, without it ceasing to exist. Something like this happened to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, which had been forgotten until the discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 (see Merzbach and Boyer, *Mathematics* 9). The existence of the ideal object depends not on a factual intention of the object but on the possibility of the consciousness of the object, which is in turn dependent on language, community and the rest of the parts of the edifice of ideality, but in like fashion it is not dependent on their particular factuality but on their pure possibility. Thus, the eternality of the ideal object depends not on the continuity of any particular language in which it has been preserved or translated, but on the pure possibility of language as such—it is only if the pure possibility of language (and community) itself is devastated that the object has ceased to be, no longer has the possibility of being brought to consciousness, and has ceased to exist in any meaningful sense whatsoever. But in such an apocalyptic circumstance there is no world and no existence either. As long as there is the possibility of language (and thus of its whole essential network, including objectivity itself), the ideal object persists as the basis for the possibility of its rediscovery.

If it seems incredible that ‘mere’ possibilities of things like language and community can issue in actually existent things, objects, which depend on them, that is because it is, or would be were that the situation which of the object. Until now I have been describing the coherence of ideal possibilities in terms of their necessity for the ideal object, which could give the impression that the object is the *product* of this structure and that objectivity is in an asymmetrical relationship to the rest. It is easier to describe the coherence when we have an idea of an ‘outcome’, and the ideal object is the reason for the elucidation of the others in the historical enquiry into the origin of geometry of Husserl. But in terms of the interrelationship of the ideal possibilities themselves, which is crucial for the adequate understanding of the conditions of geometry’s birth, as well as in order to understand the meaning of history, there is no such priority. The ideal possibilities as a

cohering whole would just as well be necessary in order to account for any one of them. I explained in the first section of this chapter how we can see this plainly in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, in which objectivity and community mutually constitute one another. Dependence is mutual between community and objectivity, because it is as a subject who intends objects and an objective world that she shares or can share with me that other subjects and the community of subjects are, as subjects, given to me. The shared objective world is essential for the intersubjective sphere which constitutes it, because it is in their having-a-world that other subjects are themselves constituted as subjects: “he is thus constituted as having ‘his own’ world just as I do” (Carr, *Problem* 96). Without the possibility of objectivity, the possibility of community which constitutes the possibility of objectivity could never be constituted.

The same goes for even the most apparently ‘primordial’ of the possibilities—repeatability. There could not be repeatability without an object to be brought to consciousness again. The reason that the symmetry of this structure is so important is that it shows that the apparent ‘goal’ of an object is not a goal, but just an essential part of the whole process—its appearance as goal-like is merely a consequence of Husserl’s starting place, the point at which he enters the hermeneutic circle. What this means is that the ostensive ‘product’—the ideal object, is not meant to be something of a different kind than what went into it. The object sought does not need to be some sort of absolute object; it is not an object in anything more or less than the phenomenological sense. The possible ideas of language, history, and so on are sufficient in their modality, because it is only the possibility of an object which is needed in order to explain the existence of a geometrical object in the most robust sense which is still meaningful.

## 4 – History delayed

Not only does Derrida's *Introduction* to the *Origin of Geometry* carefully bring Husserl's subtle navigations of the meaning of history across the entire development of his thought to light in its exquisite consistency, careful at every step to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of historicism and platonism, but he finds in the improbable locus of Husserl's reflections on—and defence of the phenomenological meaningfulness of—the origin and its essence a meaning somehow consistent with the notion of their infinite elusiveness, which was to become most characteristic of his work and the basis for the thought of deconstruction; that which united *difference* and *delay*. It is a notion which seems to be nothing if not the fundamental denial of the sense of origin. This is no hasty conclusion—the idea that the *origin* that phenomenology can and must investigate is one that is somehow consistent with its *deferral* is carefully anticipated and prepared through the entirety of Derrida's study, which weaves together the short text of the *Origin* with a carefully studied reading of Husserl's entire project reaching back before the origin of transcendental phenomenology all the way to *Logical Investigations* and even *The Philosophy of Arithmetic* in order to demonstrate the necessity of a historical phenomenology anticipated in all of Husserl's most important philosophical positions, from the refutation of psychologism to the proposal of ideal history. Even Husserl's reduction of history in *Ideas I* is explained by Derrida as anticipating a history of a different kind (see IOG 43–44). And the kind of history and historical meaning which phenomenology can and must offer is essentially one in which the thought of delay is irreducible (see IOG 153).

At the end of his *Introduction* Derrida asks the question that launched his philosophical career: is there a philosophy that respects the primordial consciousness of *delay*? The idea of delay as primordial maintains philosophy within its historical moment—the thinking of philosophy is bound up with its historicity and the two can never become disentangled. Reduction, Derrida says, is such a consciousness “in the lackluster guise of a technique” (IOG 153)—it is “pure thought investigating the sense of itself as delay within philosophy” (IOG 153), which is to say, the fundamental and contradictory self-critique that thought is the deferral of itself. Here Derrida launches the basic notions of difference and delay, or as he will later bring them together (while not reducing the tension that this must involve) according to his own coinage—‘difference’ (*différance*)—the irreducible play of differing and deferral which ‘precedes’ any identity or presence (see PP 165–66), which

is already hinted at here: “the Absolute is *present* only in being *deferred-delayed* [*différant*]” (IOG 153). The constancy of delay in philosophy and thought is due on the one hand to the truism that its origin or originary principle is always preceded by a prior origin; “Here delay is the philosophical absolute, because the beginning of methodic reflection can only consist in the consciousness of the implication of *another* previous, possible, and absolute origin in general.” (IOG 152) This thought echoes George Eliot’s at the beginning of *Daniel Deronda*—“No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or on earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out.” (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 3) But although it is a truism that every origin is itself only the issue of a prior origin (save, perhaps, one), with the idea of delay Derrida explains both reduction and transcendental enquiry as the critique of deferral in *thought* itself—that it is not merely the object of consciousness that is ‘*in medias res*’, as Eliot shows, but the thought which affords a starting point of any kind at all whether mediate or absolute. To bring this to Eliot’s claim—we cannot say that the story alone is *in medias res*, the telling of it too is always catching up with itself. The delay is already doubled because it is not only the delay of the origin of the object, but the delay of the origin of the consciousness which intends the object, also, which deprives thought of any stable ‘starting point’—specifically of the absolute originality of the now, the ‘living present’. Later in this chapter, I will explain the odd and essentially dual nature of delay in which the historicity of the search for origins extends us and our meanings infinitely into the past but also forwards into a future because the origin is still to come, the way a caterpillar is still to come.

Derrida’s startling and clear insight into Husserl’s phenomenology culminating in the *Origin* is that the “authentic historicity of thought” (IOG 153) is the consciousness within thought of thought’s own deferral. Reason is possible at all only because it is still on its way, as the simultaneous attending its *telos* and “advancing on [*en avançant sur*]” (IOG 153) its origin of reason that is formalised in the transcendental. History itself is also on its way yet. That is the paradox of history, and ultimately the paradox of reason. This ‘rooting’ in the ground of the past that is also a sort of rootedness in the sky of *telos* is the certainty of thought formalised by the transcendental, and according to Derrida “Such a certainty never had to learn that Thought would always be to come.” (IOG 153)<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Transcendence serait la certitude pure d’une Pensée qui, ne pouvant attendre vers le Telos qui s’annonce déjà qu’en avançant sur l’Origine qui indéfiniment se réserve, n’a jamais dû apprendre qu’elle serait toujours à venir.’ (L’Origine 171)



What is the meaning and what are the implications of a thinking of consciousness as historical in an always deferred sense? Is such a history capable of doing anything like grounding sense and remedying the crisis? Is the need for historicity, and temporality, Derrida so adroitly identifies as irreducibly belonging to consciousness satisfied by the deferred form thereof that he just as ably demonstrates it must take?

In this chapter I will discuss and explain Derrida's reading of Husserl's historical enquiry and pursuit of origins as infinite history in which, to paraphrase Derrida, 'delay is the absolute' (see IOG 152). I will show how this reading of the infinite within transcendental phenomenology exposes the incompleteness of its search for origin in an ontological question that gestures 'beyond' the domain of being and meaning, while demonstrating phenomenology's unimpeachable jurisdiction over not just its own proper realm, "the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception" (Crisis 49), but also over the opening to that which is neither real nor worldly created by the supposedly metaphysical question the sense of which, Derrida shows, is properly phenomenological—"why is there something rather than nothing?" (Leibniz, "Nature and Grace" 210).

I'll pursue this programme in two sections, "The origin to come" and "Delaying phenomenology." The first section explains Derrida's logic of delay or deferral; why it is the origin and not only the *telos* that is delayed; and why the origin is *delayed* rather than 'forgotten' or 'lost'. The structure of delay is further explained as a structure of the basic element of experience—the living present. Derrida argues that the temporal complexity of the experience of the moment as described by Husserl is also the origin of temporal and ontological difference. Difference issues in the same way, at the same moment, and from the same source as identity itself. In the meantime, I will also indicate how the thought of delay already gestures towards the trademark idea of differance, in which deferral and difference are brought together in a disequilibrrious codependence, or rather, explains that they both derive from a common origin in the complexity of the living present.

In the second section, "Delaying phenomenology," I will turn my attention to the relationship between primordial delay and the search for origins in transcendentalism, phenomenology as such, and philosophy at large in order to follow where an infinite history leads, and where infinite delay leaves the pursuit of grounding for science. After raising the stakes on the question through an account of Derrida's claim that the transcendental move, and the search for meaning itself, is a search for origins (or originary

principles) that are *beyond* or *other*, I announce that for Derrida the origin is not just delayed but the origin is *delay*. Meanwhile, Derrida's formulation of the ontological question is laid out in terms of the question of the origin of the unity of fact and sense; after that, I explain the priority of the phenomenological route to what is beyond, even though it is beyond, as well as why the ontological does not unseat phenomenology or compromise its necessary claim to absolute dominion in being and sense. Finally, the complexity of the living present will be revisited as the origin of delay, and I will explain why delay is grounding enough for phenomenology's needs.

### ***a. The origin to come***

On the face of it, Derrida's notion of 'delay' seems to be inappropriate for describing the elusiveness of the origin. The tense seems off—surely if the origin is lacking it is not due to the origin's 'delay', which is not an appropriate way of speaking about an essentially past event. A 'delay' of origin sounds like nonsense in contrast to the plausibility of something like 'forgottenness' or 'disappearance'. Derrida uses the same terms to describe both the non-presence of the origin and that of the *telos*/idea, despite the temporal differences they imply, rather than reserving 'delay' and 'defer' for the latter and using a term like 'forgotten' or 'elusive' to refer to non-presence in a way that respects the customary reservation of the relevance of the discourse of 'origin' for the past and for consciousness and its extensions. The forgotten origin is still the origin, while the delayed origin cannot possibly be an origin at all—how can it be the origin if it is delayed, which is to say, 'still to come'? The origin cannot succeed that which it is origin of. This impossibility is precisely Derrida's point—the notion of delay denotes a basic yet easily concealed consequence of a phenomenological rather than merely epistemic historical study. If the origin is essentially inapparent and does not simply fail to appear because of contingent obstacles, then it is not merely forgotten-yet-still-existent. We cannot say with the integrity of a reduced attitude that the origin *was*, but yet fails to appear. We can, of course, meaningfully relate to phenomena that do not appear except horizontally, as is the case with the origin which is not apparent except as a necessity for *what is*. But when an event is known only by its necessity for that which *is* given in apodeictic evidence, it is crucial to rigorously determine the sense of its necessity, and not to make assumptions of any kind with regard to it, not even as to its temporality. Not all preconditions are in the past. The origin of geometry is

an origin of an *idea*, and as an idea it is *to come*. Because what it is the origin of is to come, it is therefore eminently possible that the origin is on its way as well, the way a caterpillar is to come. There is always the possibility of a new origin, even in the age of the fully developed science. We cannot assume that the origin has already occurred if that which demonstrates its necessity as an origin is still on its way. By saying that the origin is delayed, Derrida emphasises that the origin itself, and not just the knowledge of it, is to come.

The origin is deferred. The *telos* is deferred. Deferral, or delay, separates them, from each other and from us. A *Rückfrage* is turned in upon itself, at once leading backwards and into its own arrival, a *Rückfrage* which cannot get started until it is complete. So we beat on, seeking the way back into where the ‘going on’ came from. Or is it the other way around? “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 180) Is there a difference? Is it always both?

If, as Derrida says, “Teleological sense and the sense of origin were always mutually implicated for him [Husserl]” (IOG 131)—and I am strongly inclined to agree—there is no teleology without an origin, certainly, but there is also no origin that is not an origin of a teleology, otherwise it would not be an origin nor would it be capable of being inscribed within any history, since it would be lacking the connection to a sense outside of itself, which is necessary in order to redeem it from the mere isolation of an absolutely peculiar occurrence that is not even an event. Not only is the origin, indeed, delayed, but the delayed structure of the *telos* is further deferred in that not only its consummation but even its inception (which after all are only different aspects of the same event) is infinitely delayed. The problem of the infinite task and of the infinite idea is a duplication of Zeno’s paradoxes, because the infinite is not a countable infinite. Achilles must overtake the tortoise before he can loose his arrow. The description of reason as a teleology and infinite task is therefore further complicated; it cannot be conceived in the safer way, as a project undertaken and not yet completed, for it always remains to be undertaken. It is, perhaps, in need of an undertaker if we cannot make sense of its structure or existence.

This delay matters because it determines the relationship between the origin and science, and because the situation is in fact even stranger—not only does the origin wait on a *telos* to come, but there are multiple, or perhaps, as Derrida claims, infinite, ideas with multiple origins. I will review what Derrida goes so far as to call a “double reduction” (IOG 51), which if not a double movement is perhaps a double ‘stalling’, a two-fold inertia, from both directions. The idea of pure geometry is delayed insofar as it is predicated upon the possibility of the enquiry into and reactivation of its origins in order to orient it within

the broader ideas of reason, experience, and philosophy. The *telos* is not there until the origin is. The origin is always delayed, delayed in multiple ways at the same time due to its temporal ambiguity; *the* origin is never located, because there is always a deeper and more ‘extrawordly’ origin preceding it, and because as long as the origin is the origin of an infinite project with a *telos* that is to come, the origin can always be to come itself. I will explain this thought of Derrida’s in the next paragraph. The origin is delayed in the fullest sense of not yet existing, because the idea is delayed. As long as the idea is not yet ‘here’, neither is the origin, which is nothing besides the origin of ‘it’. The origin is not there until the *telos* is. That is to say, the *telos* must already present itself at the origin of science. Thus, the infinite delay is always compounded, whether it is from the direction of the *telos* or the origin, because before one can get caught up in the delay of the one, one is already stuck with the other. This only means that delay is not simple and cannot be overcome as a static structure of delay, as though it were merely a matter of ‘waiting it out’. As infinite, it is an infinite greater than a countable infinite—it is comparable to an infinite series of whole numbers which we can only get started enumerating once we have counted the infinite fractions that come before the first of them.

The interdependence of *telos* and origin is discussed by Derrida on page 131 of his *Introduction* in order, first of all, to explain the relationship between the epochs of geometry as set out by Husserl, and, second, to resolve an apparent discrepancy between the Vienna lecture and the *Crisis* itself about whether in the mathematics of antiquity there is, in the words of the Vienna lecture, “the first discovery of both infinite ideals and infinite tasks” (*Crisis* 293), or whether ancient mathematics and geometry concern “only finite tasks, a finitely closed *a priori*” (*Crisis* 21), as he writes in the beginning of part two of the *Crisis*. If geometry is the infinitisation of the *eide* of all shapes, then, Derrida asks, are not the ancient origin of geometry, which raises the proto-geometrical arts of shape-study such as land-surveying to an infinitely exact ideal, and the modern (Galilean) universalisation of geometry, which treats the whole world as pre-existing in those exact mathematical terms, both, the one no less than the other, origins? If the origin of geometry is nothing more than the infinite determination of spatiotemporal shapes, then, Derrida implies, we cannot say that one of these (say, the factico-chronological one) is the real or true origin, while the other is merely a development thereof, an intrawordly development, notwithstanding Derrida’s unfortunately-worded claim that “The infinite infinity of the modern revolution can then be announced in the finite infinity of antiquity’s creation.” (IOG 130) Nor, presumably, can we say that the ‘latter’ origin is the origin of something other than ‘pure’

geometry—simply a different but related discipline. The ‘modern infinitization’ takes ancient geometry’s infinite determinability of the shapes within its system and, by inventing the idea of ‘geometrical space’ (a very different idea from discrete geometrical shapes), presupposes in advance that every corporeal thing as well as the world in which they are situated is absolutely determinable in geometrical science, although to describe this as a progression is already to undermine the modern rebirth’s originality. Both of these are origins of geometry because both are the origin of an infinite determination of shape. There can be two such origins because the infinite determinability of neither the one nor the other of them could be known or anticipated until the event of its invention. The Galilean invention is neither a development of an already inchoate potentiality nor a ‘taking off in another direction’, and yet it is the origin of the infinitisation of the world of shapes, an infinitisation already performed! It is just that the infinitisation that this origin originates was not yet invented at the origin of the prior origin. The origin is therefore doubled. This is what makes the origin *origina!* This spurs Derrida to question whether, since there can be more than one such origin, geometry might as well have an infinite number of origins: “But if each new infinitization is a new birth of geometry in its authentic primordial intention (which we notice still remains hidden to a certain extent by the closure of the previous system), we may wonder if it is still legitimate to speak of *an* origin of geometry.” (IOG 130-31)

This is the logic that leads us to the delay of the origin: “Must we not say that geometry is on the way toward its origin, instead of proceeding from it?” (IOG 131) It is a logic which unsettles the very notion of ‘origin’. If the ‘infinitisation’ demanded by reason may turn out (as it already seems to have done) not to be a simple (one might say, ‘finite’, or at least ‘countable’) infinitude that is invented as a ‘mobile project’ once-and-for-all, then the origin is indeed ‘to come’. But what does that mean for ‘origin’, and for a *Rückfrage*? In the logic of the infinite task, which is of course the logic of all rational activity, the origin and the *telos* lose their separateness as fully distinct points and instead “they will be revealed fully only through each other at the infinite pole of history” (IOG 131). The idea of origin as logical as well as genetic principle derives its force from this togetherness.

What is given by a history deferred? If time is no longer the unveiling ancient of a baroque allegory—an old man exposing the pale bloom of Truth’s youth in the light of day given to us by Tiepolo (see Tiepolo, *Time Unveiling Truth*)—, and if he is no longer the

father of Truth, as Francis Bacon said<sup>69</sup>, is there anything more to it than the disruption of certainties and systems? Can we say anything more of it than, to quote one of Derrida's favourite phrases, "Time is out of joint" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act 1, Scene 5)? Without time and history not even the *Authority* that Bacon refused can give us the beginnings of the meaningfulness philosophy and language commit us to. Without the idea of *reduction* (in the medical sense of 'gently' manipulating back into place what has been dislocated) we cannot even say that it is 'out of joint' in the first place—the basis for such normative claims of a *member* that is in general and in essence articulate is always the *idea*. If the critique is put, there may yet be hope for time to be reduced, so to speak. Husserl both identifies this crisis in its history and proposes a therapy for it through history, specifically a history drawn by a therapeutic *telos*—*reactivation*. However, it is a *telos* whose infinite deferral may be essential. Is the *telos*, then, the *telos*, or is rather the continual and unabated disappointment of its fulfilment the *telos*? And what is the basis for deciding between these possibilities?

If the deferral of the idea is not merely a contingent misfortune of our epoch, but a rule belonging to ideal structures themselves, then is the idea still the idea? Has it not been supplanted by the necessity of its own disappointment? At first glance this question seems to recapitulate the dichotomy between equivocality and univocity as the idea of language, but the solution to the latter cannot offer any guidance here. The necessity of univocity was demonstrated by appeal to its capacity to provide the idea of language. We cannot decide so easily here because the very structure of the idea and the *telos* must be called into question. The problem, as Derrida addresses it, is that the idea is not given phenomenologically; "Husserl never made the Idea *itself* the *theme* of a phenomenological description." (IOG 137) And later on, in *Voice and Phenomenon*, he examines the impossibility of thinking the infinitude of the idea. It is there that I will take up this theme in the final chapter.

In the following section I will say more about the relationship of the notions of delay and difference to the mature concept of *différance*, though it is worth noting now that Derrida adamantly effaced the priority of this or any other term (here he talks about 'primordial Difference'), since the name for what is not a principle or any stable object or dynamism undermines itself. For this reason, a few years later, in *Différance*, Derrida makes explicit that what he is talking about is not a term or an idea that can be spoken of

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<sup>69</sup> see Francis Bacon, *The New Organon* aph. 84: "For, truth is rightly named the daughter of time, not of authority."

equivalently through the use of a number of different interchangeable terms<sup>70</sup>; resisting the simple idea of a principle, Derrida claims to derive from the context in which his reading occurs a chain of “nonsynonymic substitutions” (D 142) to which *différance* lends itself. The play of relationships which *différance*, difference, delay and others not only signal but are caught up in cannot be dominated by a principle to which the others should be compared, and so I will resist the dominance by the more well-known names of the ideas appearing only at the end of the *Introduction* but orienting the reading before that.

“Phenomenology is always already late,” Lawlor writes (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 135). Intentionality marks phenomenology with delay. Intentionality marks the movement itself, which is built on a foundation inherited from Husserl’s teacher Franz Brentano, in this way. As such, it is a science catching up with its discovery—a science lagging behind itself. Introduced with the structure of consciousness as intentionality, the delay, which then becomes most conspicuous at the horizons of temporality, pervades the system; “At its greatest depth—i.e., in the pure movement of phenomenological temporalization as the going out from self to self of the Absolute of the Living Present—intentionality is the root of historicity.” (IOG 150) Historicity, as delay, belongs to the very structure of consciousness, even if it only reveals itself as such and without concealment at the horizon. As Lawlor writes, “The lateness, however, is not ‘a simple and faulty misery’ of thought as phenomenology, because phenomenology itself prescribes historicity for being; only phenomenology can give us access to the consciousness of the Living Present.” (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 135)

As Derrida only briefly mentions here, the absolute of sense is conceived by Husserl as always both the constituting and constituted absolute moment—“the unity of the noncoincidence and of the indefinite coimplication of the constituted and constituting moments *in the absolute identity* of a Living Present that dialectically projects and maintains *itself*” (IOG 144). Derrida characterises this, against Husserl’s objections, as dialectical in the sense that every dialectic is “only the dialectic between the dialectical (the indefinite mutual and irreducible implication of protentions and retentions) and the nondialectical (the absolute and concrete identity of the Living Present, the universal form of all consciousness)” (IOG 143). As the locus of intentionality, the living present “takes mental processes as they offer themselves as unitary temporal processes in reflection on what is immanent” (Id I 203). But it has the other aspect that in scientific reflection the constitution which creates that unity can be examined only through the complexity that can

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<sup>70</sup> “*Différance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*. (D 130)

be experienced in it (and not through a psychological abstraction). The living present is constituting because it is the origin of any sense, constituted since it is not simple in itself; it is nondialectical in that it is the single origin of experience, dialectical in that it has a temporal complexity from which it itself derives. How can we make sense of these dual aspects of the living present?

It is this ambiguity of the present as the absolute origin of the world that is responsible for the sustained paradox of the constitution of sameness on the foundation of alterity. The structure of consciousness, though grounded in the present, is still an original historicity. Though absolute (the absolute basis for any experience and thus for the phenomenological move), intentionality is never simple—its own absolute basis is the living present which is itself never a simple now-point but what John Drummond describes as a “compound intentionality that comprises primal impression, retention, and protention” (Drummond, *Historical Dictionary of Husserl's Philosophy* 123)<sup>71</sup>. The living present, likewise, is absolute; “the Living Present is the phenomenological absolute out of which I cannot go because it is that in which, toward which, and starting from which every going out is effected.” (IOG 136) Derrida puts this in the most concise, as well as in somewhat more conclusive, terms in “Violence and Metaphysics”; “The absolute impossibility of living other than in the present, this eternal impossibility, defines the unthinkable as the limit of reason.” (VM 132) It has, he writes, (once more in *Introduction*) “the irreducible originality of a Now” (IOG 136). At the same time, the present is ‘living’, though if the logic of the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*—body and flesh—was to be transposed (see UG 161 and IOG 97), then the sense of the present as constituted would have to be something more like ‘fleshly present’ or, to take advantage of a colloquial phrase, ‘fleshed-out present’. The living present means that intentionality is not something that occurs outside of time in a simple ‘now’, which is to say that the structure of temporality is not the intention by consciousness of an object which exists in its own same moment, but is temporal to the core (the core that it will not, therefore, have). This temporality accordingly has both noetic and noematic aspects; on the one hand, the object of consciousness is in flux, streaming without interruption, while on the other the consciousness of it is a complex of retentions and protentions which are inseparable from one another and from urimpressions. In Derrida’s words, in the noematic aspect of temporality as described in the *Phenomenology of*

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<sup>71</sup> see Husserl, *Time Consciousness* §11. The phrase ‘primal impression’ renders the original ‘Urimpression’. Lawlor translates Derrida’s rendering ‘*L’impression originnaire*’ (see Voix 73) with the close and preferable ‘originary impression’ (see VP 56). However in English, as with ‘*urevidenz*’, the language can well abide the neologism, which actually seems quite at home—‘urimpression’.



*Internal Time-Consciousness*, “the present appears neither as the rupture nor the effect of a past, but as the retention of a present past” (IOG 57) That is to say, the present is not in a relation with its past—it *is* a past *retained*. This is why Derrida describes the living present as a “going out from self to self” (IOG 150), since its temporalisation indicates a difference in the subject, at least in the time of the subject, preceding the constitution of the most basic element of his coherent experience and subjectivity. In the irreducible temporal complexity of intentionality, the temporal characteristic of deferral, and even the spatio-ontological characteristic of difference—anticipating the move from time to space and from deferral to difference and differance in *Voice and Phenomenon* in the difference of the self in pure temporalisation (that ‘going out from self to self’ which is intentionality’s core in the living present)—appear, ahead of Derrida’s meditation on their mutual coequality, as irreducible originary conditions of phenomenological existence.

Intentionality is only possible on the basis of a difference and deferral within its atomic structure—an interplay between presence and absence from which presence derives. Presence originates from this difference, or to be more overtly Derridean, what is already a *differance*, since it is the difference between difference and identity and “the dialectic between the dialectical... and the nondialectical” (IOG 143), an idea (or not an idea, as Derrida would have it) that I will explain in the last chapter. This is the reason that Derrida can elucidate, without contradiction, the way that, in *Cartesian Meditations*, the grounds for the possibility of experiencing other subjects are already laid in the basis of the possibility of experiencing temporal alterity<sup>72</sup> as a function of the dialectical living present: “By its very dialecticalness, the absolute primordially of the Living Present permits the reduction, without negation, of all alterity.” (IOG 86) Derrida goes beyond the analogy Husserl draws between recollections and the experience of the other (*Fremderfahrung*)—“Somewhat as my memorial past, as a modification of my living present, ‘transcends’ my present, the appresented other being ‘transcends’ my own being (in the pure and most fundamental sense: what is included in my primordial ownness)” (CM 115)—to show that the basis for both of these appresentations already belongs to the least part of experience. Because the origin of the phenomenological is not itself but the interplay between itself and what is not itself or what is not yet itself, the constitution of another time or another person is not a leap beyond what is always being performed of necessity in intention, and what is the very meaning of transcendental. That is the meaning of this phrase, which announces the

whole thought of deconstruction in one of his most puzzling and most beautiful phrases in the book, which ends part six: “The living present constitutes the other as other in itself and the same as the same in the other.” (IOG 86) There is always already within the same a *difference* which anticipates the constitution of the different time and the different subject, not on the basis of a wholly self-identical subject to which the alterity of the other would have to be reduced in order for it to be constituted within the same, but as an extension of an alterity which is already constitutive of any so-called ‘same’. From his interpretation of Husserl’s ‘living present’ Derrida takes the cutting from which he will grow his hybrid.

By determining, incisively and accurately, the temporality of intrasubjective experience as essentially a difference within the same, Derrida anticipates in an already fairly mature form the argument he makes in *Voice* that the temporal deferral is always also spatial and therefore ontological; “In a certain way, therefore, intersubjectivity is first the nonempirical relation of Ego to Ego, of my present presents to other presents as such; i.e., as others and as presents (as past presents).” (IOG 86) This means that before there is the empirical relation of intersubjectivity, intersubjectivity already exists as the relation of my self to my self—what is both completely ‘me’ but also, since it belongs as urimpression to a completely ‘other’ present, ‘other’. The absolute beginning of the self involves an irreducible ‘retention’ which belonged already to an other self as urimpression but now belongs to the present as the retention. But because this present is not a composite, the whole language of ‘other’ and ‘self’, and ‘past and present’ as well, is brought into question—the present *is* the past retained means that the same *is* the other.

While Derrida argues for the necessity of this interpretation, he also mentions in a footnote on page 86 that in unpublished material from around the time of the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl “seems to go much further” than the analogy presented in the main text;

‘Urhytle,’ i.e., temporal hyle, is defined there as the ‘core of the other than the Ego’s own’ (*Ichfremde Kern*). Cf. *Group C 6* (August 1930), p. 6. On the sense of this notion of ‘alien to my Ego,’ ‘the intrinsically first other,’ or of ‘the first “non-Ego”’ in the constitution of the *alter ego*

(IOG 86–87fn).

This shows a different approach to an originary alterity—the *hyle* or ‘sensuous stuffs’ (see Id I 205), which is the sensuous content of such an object as has it—is the alterity which is

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<sup>72</sup> see CM §52, and for further analysis of the relation between intersubjectivity, temporality and history see Carr, *Problem* 94 and Staehler, “What is the Question to Which Husserl’s *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* is the Answer?” 114f

the common ground of the other and the same, not in a natural or psychological sense, as it might seem, but because the basic element of my or an other's ego is always the conscious intention of an object.

That other time is irreducible to my present subjective experience (as for instance 'its' past), since it is another 'origin', another absolute source of experience, and this is why the temporality of experience and the relation to others have a relationship that is more than analogical—a common direct ancestor in the "auto-temporalization of the Living Present" (IOG 152). As Lawlor explains, Derrida picks this thread up again in "Violence and Metaphysics" by way of refuting Levinas' criticism that for Husserl in *Cartesian Meditations*, the other is ignored, neutralised, 'reduced to the same': "according to Levinas, by making the other, notably in the *Cartesian Meditations*, the ego's phenomenon, constituted by analogical appresentation on the basis of belonging to the ego's own sphere, Husserl allegedly missed the infinite alterity of the other, reducing it to the same." (VM 123) By Derrida's reasoning, this criticism ignores the already constitutive role of the other, without which there is no same, no ego to begin with. As Lawlor writes, "Derrida argues that the intentionality aiming at the other is 'irreducibly mediate' (ED 182/123)." (Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 162) It is exactly this that Derrida means in the *Introduction* when he claims: "By its very dialecticalness, the absolute primordially of the Living Present permits the reduction, *without negation*, of all alterity." (IOG 86) The ambiguous temporality of the living present leaves the other potent and not neutralised in the way Levinas had warned, while the same is constituted in alterity, but as itself.

### ***b. Delaying phenomenology***

In the penultimate paragraph of his *Introduction* Derrida brings together the thought of deferral and the thought of difference in nearly as important a place as it will hold when he comes to give it a name (that, he pleads, is not a name) in 'differance' (*différance*) and to thematise it in the eponymous paper (that, he would have to plead, is not an eponymous paper). This occurs when he supposes that "what has always been said under the concept of '*transcendental*,' through the enigmatic history of its displacements [*déplacements*]" (IOG 153, my interpolation of the original French) is nothing other than "The primordial Difference of the absolute Origin" (IOG 153). This last and most enigmatic thought,

which culminates the thinking of delay in phenomenology, gestures towards the ‘mature’ and expansive concept (which will not then be a concept) by opening up the meaning of Husserl’s term ‘transcendental’ to look back on its own history—not only the similar Kantian use of it, but even its Medieval sense having to do with qualities predicable on any and all existing things, and finally its original sense in the Aristotelian view of God—and recognise the suprahistorical common denominator in its essential meaning as the location of a principle or origin of things in otherwise than they are; a quest which Levinas, in “Humanism and An-archy” will say is the goal and function of reason as such; “All rationality then amounts to the discovery of the origin, the principle. Reason is an archaeology...” (Levinas, “Humanism is an An-archy” 131). The later development of Derrida’s philosophy beyond commentary on Husserl is anticipated in its expansion and its consistency in this reflection on the meaning of ‘transcendental’.

Derrida gestures beyond the specific applicability of his thinking of deferral/difference to phenomenology, and towards its priority in any philosophy as such, that is, any enquiry into “the beyond or the this-side [*l’au-delà ou l’en-deçà*] which gives sense to all empirical genius and all factual profusion” (IOG 153<sup>73</sup>). In the conclusion of his interpretation of phenomenology, Derrida begins to suggest something like a ‘deconstruction’ which will have a trajectory of its own, which will be concerned not only with the explication of phenomenology’s peculiar transcendental structure, but the transcendental (writ large) structure of various other philosophies, and in its most ambitious formulations of philosophy *itself*. Nevertheless, this *birth* of deconstruction both has the unimpeachable novelty of a birth and is thoroughly within phenomenology, in a sense that I would aver is somewhat more than genealogical—it is phenomenology alone which discloses the structural ‘differance’ at work in every transcendental, in every philosophy. Thus, while we the readers are present at a birth, it is the kind of birth Derrida describes in the advent of the modern (Galilean) mathematico-scientific project: “this self-rebirth [*renaissance à soi*] will be at the same time only a new *obliteration* of the first birth (certificate)” (IOG 130). In a metaphor I used already, it is somewhat more like a graft,

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<sup>73</sup> In *Voice and Phenomenon* Derrida returns to this transcendental core of philosophicality as a characteristic of phenomenology, but without any longer emphasising the delay involved in the transcendental; “phenomenological transcendental idealism responds to the necessity to describe the *objectivity* of the *object* (*Gegenstand*) and the *presence* of the present (*Gegenwart*)—and the objectivity in presence—on the basis of an ‘interiority,’ or rather on the basis of a self-proximity, of an *ownness* (*Eigenheit*), which is not a simple *inside*, but the intimate possibility of the relation to an over-there and to an outside in general.” (VP 19) The delay which Derrida had previously read into Husserl he now raises as a criticism, characterising the transcendental move as a ‘possibility’, rather than an idea (in the Kantian sense), against which the necessity of delay would deal a heavy blow.

which derives its character primarily from the tree the cutting is taken from, but which gets its sustenance from its root-stock. It is a clone, standing on roots of another tree. That is to say, because this rebirth is an ‘authentic rebirth’ and a kind of culmination of the idea of phenomenology as the pursuit of origins, it is itself a critique of what is both its source and its self, which confronts the latter with the fact that it had not itself been born yet—it shows that as long as phenomenology did not fully recognise the infinite delay of any origin it was still on its way to its birth.

Because the transcendental both within and outside of phenomenology’s rendezvous with it is broadly the origin of all that is—the variety of originating principles which every philosophy after its own fashion identifies as the principle and source of all things and thus is the way to make sense of them, which is in each case the transcendental for its own philosophical system—it is always deferred/delayed. As Derrida puts it; the ‘Absolute origin’ “can and indefinitely must both retain and announce its pure concrete form with a priori security” (IOG 153)—this means nothing more than that the structure of an origin, principle, or transcendental involves its simultaneous concealment and disclosure. The origin is ‘announced’ as that whereby a thing is given (exists)—the ‘why’ of it (see IOG 150)—which leads the philosophical consideration on to a metaphysics and ontology.<sup>74</sup> But the pursuit of it is always and indefinitely deferred; for every origin that can be indicated an origin of its own remains hidden; for every ‘why’ which speaks its name a prior ‘why’, as though it were the irritating persistence of the child’s question, is also voiced. At least, such is the case for every origin that is an *existent*—Heideggerean ontology escapes this infinite regress, and that escape is very important for Derrida’s reading of Husserl, as we will see in the following chapter. The meaning of the key phrase indicating the primordially of delay, which I have already cited twice in part, is just this inextricability of delay from the origin; “Here delay is the philosophical absolute, because the beginning of methodic reflection can only consist in the consciousness of the implication of *another* previous, possible, and absolute origin in general.” (IOG 152) The reason is simple—origins are objects of thought and as such they are things and must have origins of their own. But Derrida’s ingenious trick here is to acknowledge the necessity of this and rather than throwing up his hands at the destruction of all origins and principles, to realise that

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<sup>74</sup> Derrida argues, in *Voice and Phenomenon* and in “Phenomenology and the Closure of Metaphysics”, that Husserl’s relationship to metaphysics was critical rather than condemnatory, that as with rationality his criticisms were aimed at a certain crisis in metaphysics with the intent of saving metaphysics as such; “Husserl, by constantly criticizing metaphysical speculation, was truly aiming

this makes delay itself the absolute, the origin of origination and transcendence as such. Like Kant with his copernican turn, Derrida notices that what had forbidden the excavation of certain depths sought by enquiry is just what liberates enquiry from the necessity of starting there. Deferral and difference are not merely the unfortunate characteristics of any transcendental—they are themselves transcendental. It is not just that the origin is delayed; delay is the origin. And this brings us back to the origin of the same in alterity.

When Derrida calls factuality back into the room, at the end of his *Introduction*, it is not as an empiricist critique of or rebuke to philosophy (and thus, to phenomenology); and when at the same time he goes outside of phenomenology to the philosophical question of ontology, it is only as governed and raised by a phenomenology. The distinction Derrida makes between the sense of history and the being, which he explicitly distinguishes as being in the ‘non-Husserlian sense’, of history, he claims himself, does not ‘stem from’ phenomenology nor does it “*simply* precede transcendental phenomenology as its presupposition or latent ground” (IOG 150). What this means is that it is only possible after phenomenology, because it will require Derrida to remain faithful to, and not to confuse and upset, the work done in reduction to both rigorously distinguish being from the non-sense of metaphysical hypostatisation and separate it from the supposed need to be grounded in the latter or in *anything* else, anything besides the grounding it establishes in itself. I will return shortly to his explanation for a new, phenomenological but ‘non-Husserlian’ question of being, but first I will explain how the question rears its head.

When in the preceding section I examined the roots of history in delay, as the retention of the past in the living present and the constitution of the same on the basis of the other in intentionality, I showed that, on the level of its constituted immanence, temporal horizons are not a break from a self-identical homogeneous ‘present’. There is no clearly definable limit in which the past ceases to *be* present and *becomes* other. Retention, memory and history are not all part of the present in the instant of its constitution, retention alone possesses this privilege, but they are all made possible in the same moment by the same movement which brings the present into being. Derrida indicates this in *Voice and Phenomenon* when against the clarity of a limit defined by Husserl in *Internal Time Consciousness* in opposition to Brentano as “a radical discontinuity between retention and

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his critique only at the perversion or the degeneration of what he continues to think and to want to restore as authentic metaphysics or *philosophia protē*.” (VP 5)

reproduction, between perception and imagination, etc., and not between perception and retention” (SP 64)<sup>75</sup> Derrida raises other evidence from *Internal Time Consciousness*; “in the preceding section, was not the question of a continuous mediation posed in a really explicit way?” (VP 55) Following his long quotations of this evidence, Derrida writes;

As soon as we admit this continuity of the now and the non-now, of perception and non-perception in the zone of originarity that is common to originary impression and to retention, we welcome the other into the self-identity of the *Augenblick*, non-presence and non-evidentness into the *blink of an eye of the instant*.

(VP 56)

The question that seems to guide Husserl’s enquiry—what is the sense of histor(icit)y—is already answered in itself, or it is an over-complication of the question. To ask after the sense of historicity is to ask how history is meaningful, but as Derrida says; “In all the significations of this term, historicity is *sense*.” (IOG 150) This statement is a challenge because it takes the question to presuppose a difference between history and sense; a temporal difference. The meaning of the question is predicated on the assumption that sense is present and the present is not history, and therefore what is being asked is how history belongs to the present; is presented to the present. To ask what is the sense of history would be to ask how history belongs to sense, which is to say what is the possibility of sublimating history to the present. This is why it is the wrong question; by presupposing the existential priority of the present *as* present, history can only be conceived on the basis of a *relation* belonging to the present, and therefore as secondary and perpetually subject to the temporality of the same. Yet Derrida has brought to light the meaning of intentionality as the constitution of the present on the basis of the retention of the past. There is no ‘starting point’ in a present which is not already also its past, and therefore sense is not independent of historicity in the way that the question suggests. Because historicity is contiguous with the sense-making of intention in the living present in the only way they could be contiguous (outside of a presentism that would be just the negation of time as such), through their common feature of deferral, the question does not arise.

Historicity is sense—Derrida says that this holds for *all* significations of historicity, and it is so because both historicity and sense are essentially delay—the infinitely deferred horizon of the origin/*telos*. Husserl is explicit in the *Origin*, through the interdependent matrix of ideality, that all sense is historical; as I explained in chapter three, the possibility

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<sup>75</sup> I have switched to David B. Allison’s translation here, as I will from time to time, for the purpose of the syntax into which the quotation is to be incorporated.

of intention depends on the pure possibility of history. The transcendental is “the beyond or the this-side which gives sense to all empirical genius and all factual profusion” (IOG 153) which just means that meaning grounds itself by way of this going beyond itself of meaning to a something beyond as its origin (and thus principle or *archè*) that transcendentalism is.

Because he determines the essence of meaning as the passage beyond to an origin or principle, and shows the necessity of this structure as perpetually in delay (see IOG 152f), Derrida permits us to explain that the interdependence of idealities is inalienable and not due to the particular meanings of the ideal terms. Any ideal structure which presents itself as the principle of an ideal capacity is itself possible on the basis of all of the other principles which form the coherence (*‘Zusammenhang’*) of ideality. The ideal structure is called on to account for the existence of phenomena, to give them meaning, however because of the ineluctability of delay and the multiplicity of origins, the ideas themselves will always evoke and open up onto still more ideas, bringing the entire coherence into account at every turn. The meaningful is meaningful because it calls up other meanings as prior in order to ground it, but because those prior meanings are ‘delayed’, they depend on their own prior meanings for their grounding. A circularity belongs to the system of meaning due to the structure of delay, but if it is not necessarily a virtuous circle it certainly is not a vicious one so long as meaning is not expected to be any more solid than what it rests on.

The equivalency of historicity and sense within the fundamental transcendental structure (of delay) accounts for the possibility of history, in the Husserlian sense; what Derrida calls history’s *‘how’*—history is possible because it is not an addition or a realm that sense ventures into; sense is always historical from the ‘beginning’—, but it is here that what he calls the question of history’s *‘why’* crops up, the need to acknowledge the *possibility*, in a non-Husserlian sense, of history—“*Is there, and why is there, any historical factuality?*” (IOG 150)—dragging along with it the ontological question and, he claims, the question of fact, understandable only in the footsteps of the rigorously reduced study of the sense of history and according to the primordially of delay. Historical factuality, not to be confused with a ‘factual history’, which as I explained in chapter two is nothing but a pseudo-history without any rigorously determined eidetic sense—viz., a nonsense—which must be reduced, eidetically, in order for its meaning to be restored (as Derrida acknowledges on IOG 44. From 47–51 another, historical reduction is elaborated). *Historical factuality*, then,



would be what exists as fact when it has been reduced, or in other words; the historical fact to which belongs an ideal sense as fact<sup>76</sup>, and yet which is also irreducibly historical.<sup>77</sup> Rather than being external to ideal history, the most essential (emphasising both aspects of the word) history and the basis for any possibility of factual history itself, Derrida acknowledges that fact is itself the essence of history; “History as institutive would be the profound area where sense is indissociable from being” (IOG 46)—and the kind of ‘being’ he means here is explicitly factual being—being which is essentially the singularity and ‘here and now-ness’ of an event; “Is this experience, unique of its kind, not a singular fact—one for which we should not be able to substitute another fact as an example in order to decipher its essence.” (IOG 47)

Without the fact, everything would happen at once and all ideas and tasks would already be available and indifferent to their initial creation. Of course, even though the fact, the historical factuality, is not reducible to the idea which it ‘contains’, for which it is the context, indispensable and non-substitutable, it itself has an essence, an “*essence-of-the-first-time*” (IOG 48), which unites the fact from the beginning with its own sense;

a unique fact already has its essence as unique fact which, by being nothing other than the fact itself (this is the thesis of the non-fictive irreality of the essence), is not the factuality of fact but the sense of fact—that without which the fact could not appear and give rise to any determination or discourse.

(IOG 48)

The sense of the fact is the reproducibility of its very singularity, the universal applicability of its non-substitutability, without which it would not have any meaning let alone be determinable within a phenomenology. Without the reproducibility of sense in its unity with fact we would have “to say that this inseparability of fact and sense in the oneness of an instituting act precludes access for phenomenology to all history and to the pure *eidos* of a forever submerged origin” (IOG 47). It is the unity of sense and fact that allows Derrida to say that “Provided we respect its *phenomenological* value, such an assertion [that historicity is sense] does not transgress sense itself, i.e., history’s *appearing* and the *possibility* of its appearing.” (IOG 150) Without what Derrida alludes to as an anti-philosophical hypostatisation of the fact beyond all sense—the absolutely non-rationalised fact—the priority of phenomenology remains and sense is not transgressed.

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<sup>76</sup> See IOG 48: “For a unique fact already has its essence as unique fact which, by being nothing other than the fact itself (this is the thesis of the non-fictive irreality of the essence), is not the factuality of fact but the sense of fact—that without which the fact could not appear and give rise to any determination or discourse.”

The ‘irreducible historicity’ which Derrida refers to, however, is not just a figure of speech—he means that historicity is not *eidetically* reducible, just as factual being is distinguished from the meaning of a fact, which thus is ontologically ideal. It seems not to be enough for factual being that it is the idea of factuality—that the historical factuality of the origin exist within an “*essence-of-the-first-time*” (IOG 48)—this would not be factually *being*, but like everything else within an eidetic reduction which is global, ideal being with an essential factuality, which is to say factuality as a meaning bound up in its essence. Eidetically reduced factuality would be eidetic, of course, the same way that the psychic was shown to be in chapter three—it would be nothing more than a meaning belonging to ideal being. How can we make sense, or rather, what is far more difficult, refrain from making sense, of a different way of being belonging to factuality, which Derrida insists we must? This is the problem posed by a ‘historical reduction’ distinct from the eidetic one and which explicitly does not merely take place in the space mapped out by the latter; “there is no simple response to the question of the priority of one reduction over another” (IOG 48). It is not, therefore, a question of the mere idea of fact, but being which exists as fact.

It is necessary to descend to these murky depths because of the serious implications of falling prey to the seductions of the latter horn of the dilemma Derrida presents—“If we take for granted the philosophical nonsense of a purely empirical history and the impotence of an ahistorical rationalism, then we realize the seriousness of what is at stake.” (IOG 51)—, and because in order to perform the *reactivation* which is Husserl’s proposed therapy for the crisis, a history which can get at what never became ideal must be employed. For this task, “Instead of repeating the constituted sense of an ideal object, one will have to reawaken the dependence of sense with respect to an inaugural and institutive act concealed under secondary passivities and infinite sedimentations” (IOG 47–48). This *act* did not exist as eidetic before the historical enquiry, which determines it therefore as a *fact* in its very being. Reactivation goes beyond the resources of ideal history, in which, for all the reasons I detailed in chapter three, and because of the basic limitation of the eidetic to the objective, eidetic science including eidetic history will always be of an *eidos* which is “constituted and objective” (IOG 47). Historical reduction, Derrida claims, “will be *reactivating* and noetic” (IOG 47); it will reactivate the inaugural act, rather than just the constituted sense of an ideal object intended by the act. This *act*, the noetic correlate of the

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<sup>77</sup> “But an irreducible historicity is announced in that this ‘*must*’ is announced only *after* the fact of the event.” (IOG 49)

noema, is the *fact*. The act is the act of consciousness in which the ideal object is conceived, and the fact of its invention regards not just the ideal object for which that fact is indifferent, but the act of its inaugural intention which is absolutely non-interchangeable. The possibility of such a reactivation, however, is only as noematic—it is as the content of a further act of reactivation that what was once the noetic counterpart of a noema (for that is the only way we could have evidence of the necessity of an act) will be reactivated, and not as noetic itself. Certainly, the noetic correlate itself neither has the potential to persist in time and be shared communally the way that its noematic content does, but even more basically, the act must be transformed into a content in order to be the object of a history. The *reactivation*, then, cannot be the reactivation of activity *as activity*, it must reactivate it as content, making ‘reactivation’ somewhat of a misnomer. It is as eidetic, therefore, that the historical factuality of the engendering act is given to evidence. Thus, the fact is not without meaning, but it is what is historical and yet had not been meaningful before. The notion of factual being then has some ambiguity—it exists in idea as a factual existence.

The ontological question, then, is not a change of topic from the phenomenological one, not a complete shift to the absolute irrationality of a pure fact; it arises within the inquiry into the sense of history as it bends towards the sense of the fact, of history’s fact. The question that orients the *Origin*, “how is there history?” opens up the dual ontological question; “is there, and why is there, history rather than nothing?” As the sense of factuality and facts, phenomenology could keep such questions at bay, but what delay has shown as the common foundation of history and sense, is that as the sense of facts sense does not absolutely precede the fact (sense is not a self-identical whole), but their primordial unity derives from the transcendental delay of an origin in which each is bound, as Derrida rephrases his ontological question; “*What is the primordial unity of sense and fact, a unity for which, by themselves alone, neither can account?*” (IOG 151) The mutually dependent unity of sense and fact (and the unity of all the other ideal structures discussed in the second chapter of this thesis) opens up a question that is ontological for the reason that it gestures to something (which will not be a thing, since it precedes both sense and fact) that precedes sense. But because it also precedes fact it is not an anti-philosophical empiricism. It is an ontological question in the Heideggerean mould since it asks after what makes all being possible; “why is there history rather than nothing?” The answer will not be a thing, neither a factual nor a sensible thing (which are always the same), it is *delay*.

The engagement Derrida orchestrates between phenomenology and ontology obviously draws heavily on Heidegger's ontological difference, and especially its groundbreaking (in the most literal sense) recognition that the answer to the ontological question ('why is there something rather than nothing?') will not itself be something. It cannot be an entity or the question would remain unanswered. Like the ontological difference, Derrida's ontological question brings ontology into phenomenology, beyond the shallowness of a metaphysics that would be unable to answer its own most basic question because, as in for example an empiricism, it is unwilling to recognise that the origin of the positivity it concerns itself with will not itself be anything positive, will, indeed, resist the entire structure of language which forcefully inserts copulae and a whole grammar of positivity into the discourse on 'it'.<sup>78</sup> In an empiricism, or any other kind of metaphysical realism, the ontological question (shallow as it is) would be what Derrida insists it is not in the way he reveals it as opened up by phenomenology; phenomenology's "presupposition or latent ground" (IOG 150). Ontology of that kind would restore phenomenology to subjugation as a 'mere appearing' made possible by a reality.

The question 'why'—why is there factuality, or to put it another way, since there is no factuality outside of its unity with sense—why is there "*the primordial unit of sense and fact*" (IOG 151)—is beyond phenomenology<sup>79</sup> because what it inquires of is essentially prior to the factual and the meaningful which is the condition for all experience. However, this *reason* is always deferred precisely because it is prior to sense (and fact)—in a sense it remains under phenomenology's wing, because it is only its annunciation within the phenomenology of historical factuality that appears (as "eternally the *apeiron*" (IOG 151fn quoting from PRS 116). As Derrida writes; "Phenomenology alone can make infinite historicity appear: i.e., infinite discourse and infinite dialecticalness as the pure possibility

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<sup>78</sup> Derrida himself, in an interview published in *Lettres Françaises* no. 1211 6–12 December 1967 and translated into English in the collection of interviews titled *Positions*, acknowledged a sort of 'provisional' 'naming' of Heidegger's ontological difference in the discourse of difference, while also insisting that an 'openness' to difference would no longer be determined by the metaphysical or onto-theological attachment that despite Heidegger's intent continued to belong to "the difference between Being and beings" (Derrida, *Positions* 8). He claims that difference "would not have been possible without the attention to what Heidegger calls the difference between Being and beings, the ontico-ontological difference such as, in a way, it remains unthought by philosophy" (Derrida, *Positions* 8). Derrida thus describes his own neologism (that is not a neologism) as doing the work that Heidegger's ontological thinking could not do because of its limitations to "the language of the West" (Derrida, *Positions* 8) and to a certain still 'positive' thinking that permeated Heidegger's discourse of 'Being'.

<sup>79</sup> "Thus, knowing what the sense of an event is on the basis of a factual [*événementielle*] example, and what the sense of sense in general is on the basis of exemplariness in general, we can then ask ourselves a question which no longer proceeds from phenomenology as such." (IOG 151)

and the very essence of Being in manifestation.” (IOG 152). Moreover, because of that infinity—the essential delay of the ontological—phenomenology is never surpassed and certainly never sees closure, even though it announces a ‘beyond’;

Since this propaedeutic [phenomenology, understood as the quasi-propaedeutic for every philosophical ‘*decision*’] is always announced as infinite, that moment is not a factuality but an ideal sense, a right which will always remain under phenomenological jurisdiction, a right that phenomenology alone can exercise by explicitly anticipating the end of its itinerary.

(IOG 150)

What is delayed in this ontological question is itself nothing more than delay, or, to be more precise, it is, as I explained above, not *something*, some character or other, that is delayed—it cannot be because as long as the existence of all things were explained on the basis of a thing, the existence of that thing would remain unexplained—<sup>80</sup>and therefore delay is infinite, and no ‘thing’ is delayed but delay itself. The delay of delay sounds like the kind of obscurantist obfuscations that has attracted so much ridicule to Derrida, both deserved and totally unwarranted, however it has a rigorously determined sense. The delayed ‘answer’ of the ontological question cannot be anything but delay, and this is determined in at least two ways; first, the ontological question, like the transcendental question and perhaps any philosophical question that really is a question, is the question of an origin and, as I have already shown, Derrida demonstrates that the absolute origin is nothing but delayed; second, the infinite delay within phenomenology of the “philosophical *decision*” (IOG 150) for which it is a propaedeutic, because it is infinite, reveals that the ‘decision’ (the ontology) is itself delay, otherwise its infinity would abolish its sense and it would no longer be a delay but simple absence of the kind that phenomenology does not, as a rule, announce. Phenomenology, as Derrida indicates, opens up the question of the origins of sense and being, and because this asks after the origin of being, what it asks after will not be positive. However, neither can it be mere lack or

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<sup>80</sup> Of course, theological philosophy has wrestled with this problem since Aristotle, whose notion of an ‘unmoved mover’ was an attempt to subvert the ontological question by accounting for being by way of a being whose existence was spontaneous. Natural science has shown itself less metaphysically adept in seeking an explanation of the universe by the ‘big bang’. The only reason this has satisfied a search for origins is because a sleight of hand has replaced the question of the origin of being with the far more mundane question of the origin of what is now. By changing the meaning of ‘universe’, natural science has forgotten the question of origins. Heidegger’s ontological difference, however, shows that even Aristotle’s conception of the problem as one of *cause* avoided the incisiveness of ontology’s ‘why’. To look for a cause is to look for a ‘thing’, and therefore this way of inquiring into origins is doomed to failure.

absence, since the merely null is not indicated in a question. Delay, then is what we call the not-yet-appearing from which appearing bursts forth.

Paradoxically, the infinite nature of delay is what allows us to carry on, both in phenomenological study and in deconstruction. When Derrida writes that “delay is the philosophical absolute” (IOG 152) it is not a cry of resignation, but a recognition that the infinite task and its infinite history open onto an infinite beyond themselves at every turn.

An ontology which exceeds the phenomenological is announced within transcendental phenomenology, but although the evidence of what is not phenomenologically reduced has the potential to overcome phenomenology by confronting phenomenology with the limits of reduction, thus bringing about a closure to the adequacy of phenomenological enquiry, the delay of this ontology maintains the indefinite openness of phenomenology’s domain. Does this closure restore phenomenology to the place relegated to it in Kantianism—beholden to an unknowable but prior and more real *noumenon*? Such a demotion would effectively destroy phenomenology, which in Husserl’s *copernican turn* wrests authority over the entire realm of existence by legitimately taking existence itself to be appearance (rather than what appearance indicates) and criticising the supposition of a ground-beyond-all-possible-experience as a philosophically sophisticated scepticism introduced without evidence. None of this is the upshot of Derrida’s ‘commentary’, as he will call part of what he does in *Voice*. To understand it in this way, as a devastating critique of transcendental phenomenology, would be to misunderstand the profundity of delay in Derrida’s thought. Delay is of course not merely an epistemic obstacle, delay does not keep some real and present answer to the ontological question from coming to philosophy; rather, delay is the answer (or, quasi-answer) to the question; it is an ontology of delay. Moreover, delay, just like the *differance* to come and Heidegger’s *Being*, is not the name of some *thing*. There is not, in delay, anything which is a more profound reality than the phenomenological, and yet delay is the answer to the question why in the unity of fact and sense, things appear. Nevertheless, because there is not some *noumenal* realm concealed by the delay, phenomenology can never be relegated to a merely epistemic status. What is more, it is only in phenomenology that the infinite history and delay, and therefore the ontology which “owes its seriousness to a phenomenological certainty” (IOG 151), appear and can be accounted for.

Derrida does not get bogged down with the questions of whether an idea which is deferred in the ways I have explicated is yet an idea—the idea of delay of the idea is only

really proposed on the last two pages of his *Introduction*—but he offers a solution to these problems nonetheless, or rather, a solution can be found there. It arises by way of his wrestling with a problem I spent a great deal of time on in this thesis; the intra-historical supratemporality of ideas.

The rehabilitation of the idea is not to be found in situating it within a solid foundation, of finding some stable resting place from out of which the infinitely deferred *telos* and infinitely deferred origin can emerge as stable (as it were) ‘countable’ infinities proceeding in a linear if still boundless trajectory. Rather, it is precisely the pursuit of a stable point of departure, a starting place though one *in medias res*, that gets us into so much trouble here. The problem with a *telos* or an origin that is infinitely deferred, or with the codependent (decon-)struction of *telos* and origin in which the infinite deferral of each defers the other, is that it robs us of that minimal and perhaps adequate stability which a more straightforward model of an infinite task or an always preceded origin afforded—a place to start. It is after all for the sake of a present science and structure of meaning that the historical phenomenology and the entire enquiry into crisis was begun, and it is that more than the existence of an absolute origin itself which ideal history and reactivation most urgently hope to obtain. We do not require the presence of the idea fully realised and brought to act, but the idea as a goal which orients our seeking. The recognition of deferral and delay in the stability of an infinite idea is disruptive not because it precludes the obtainment of a simple origin or an end that is in reach—it disrupts the now, the possibility of a stable point of origin for any enquiry and the source of apodeictic certainty in experience. Derrida understands the complex self-reflexivity of Husserl’s ‘living present’ as an answer to this conundrum. Delay calls for the careful phenomenological determination of what is necessary as the source of experience, and not the reactionary sceptical dismissal of the possibility as such at the first signs of trouble.

On the basis of a deferred idea and a delayed origin an absolute present cannot be constituted, but such a simple and monolithic ‘now’ is not what gives itself as the time of experience. The question, then, is not whether the present as such, the idea of a present, is disrupted by the deferral of the idea (just as the question is also not whether a *telos* or origin ‘exists’ as such), but whether a present which both emerges from and launches origins and ideas can be sufficiently accounted for, which is to say, adequately described, if its origin and its *telos* are infinitely deferred. In the structure of delay, there will certainly never be a stable and absolutely present point, but such presence is never what has been given in experience. Investigation will show that such a complex present can indeed be

described—that if the living present is itself as complex and deferred as Derrida claims it is (and I believe this is consistent with Husserl’s elucidation of the living present), then the deferral of its temporal horizons should not be surprising or discomfiting. This is the meaning of the enigmatic claim made by Derrida in the third-to-last paragraph of his *Introduction*; “Since this alterity of the absolute origin structurally appears in *my Living Present* and since it can appear to be recognized only in the primordially of something like *my Living Present*, this very fact signifies the authenticity of phenomenological delay and limitation.” (IOG 152–53)

The delayed origin, which is to say, the origin which does not (yet) appear, is phenomenologically ‘authentic’ because it nevertheless appears, in its deferral (viz., in the irreducible “unity of appearing and disappearing” [IOG 152] which comprises any absolute present), in the primordial living present, and because the structure of delay needed to account for its paradoxical disclosure as concealed is already the structure of the present, and therefore it does not need to be accounted for by a kind of ‘break’ or ad hoc multiplication of divisions. It avoids the irreducibility of a pluralism. The phenomenological ‘authenticity’ of delay discloses the simultaneous simplicity and complexity of the living present. Derrida is adamant that the living present constitutes a dialectic of protentions and retentions, despite Husserl’s insistence (see IOG 58) and Cavallè’s distinction (see IOG 143)<sup>81</sup>;

(as every authentic dialecticity wants) this movement was only the dialectic between the dialectical (the indefinite mutual and irreducible implication of protentions and retentions) and the nondialectical (the absolute and concrete identity of the Living Present, the universal form of all consciousness)

(IOG 143)

As absolute identity and the primordial present, the living present is the necessary starting point for the appearance of deferral, while as a (dialectical) complex of constituting parts, the present consists of a structure which is itself deferred (from itself), which is not in simple self-identity. Thus there is not the need to posit a present which is of a different temporal structure from its own horizons and to therefore invoke the need of a hypostatized fracturing of presence. Most crucially, the evidence for the delayed origin (and idea as well) does not consist of a self-identity which that origin could never account for; it consists of ‘passage’ which is of a form not unlike its own.

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<sup>81</sup> The strand of Derrida’s use of the metaphor of interweaving is traced by Lawlor in *Derrida and Husserl* 176f, while the play on the French homographs *fil* (son) and the plural of *fil* (thread) ties



On this account, delay is not, as one might think, a misfortune and an accident which by always stealing the origin and *telos* away keeps experience confined to its own little island of presence. On the contrary, deferral begins in the present and therefore it is primarily the relentless ecstatic movement of temporality—the fugitive ‘now’; “the inability to live enclosed in the innocent undividedness [*indivision*] of the primordial Absolute” (IOG 153). Delay is not the obstruction of temporal horizons, it is their condition of possibility. As Derrida says in his description of intentionality; “The latter is also nothing but the Absolute of a living Movement without which neither its end nor its origin would have any chance of appearing.” (IOG 150) As such, it is the condition of possibility for phenomenology itself, but this claim *itself* can only come from phenomenology, as Derrida notes; “that delay is the destiny of Thought itself as Discourse—only a phenomenology can *say* this and make philosophy equal to it” (IOG 152), because phenomenology alone starts from delay in the basic structure of the same—the living present.

Derrida writes;

[Phenomenology] alone can make infinite historicity appear: i.e., infinite discourse and infinite dialecticalness as the pure possibility and the very essence of Being in manifestation. It alone can open the absolute subjectivity of Sense to Being-History by making absolute transcendental subjectivity appear (at the end of the most radical reduction) as pure passive-active temporality, as pure auto-temporalization of the Living Present—i.e., as we *already* saw, as intersubjectivity.

(IOG 152)

What Derrida means here is that only in phenomenology can the transcendental beyondness of history (which he rightly identifies with being, recognising that to say the other)<sup>82</sup> be presented within an a priori. Only phenomenology can begin with its absolute starting point in subjectivity, the only absolute starting point, and make the transcendental of historical being appear within it. A system without the delicate negotiations of Husserl’s would have to present historical being, other people, infinite history, and primordial delay each as something outside of and radically other than the subject; things which the subject could only comprehend by dominating and thus denaturing. But because the transcendental subject, in Derrida’s interpretation, is the “pure auto-temporalization of the Living Present” which is to say is pure delay, and therefore is neither a self-identical one, nor in its

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together themes of parricide and text in “Plato’s Pharmacy” and “The Double Session”. See PP 71 & 84 and “The Double Session” 224.

<sup>82</sup> Being is, Derrida writes just above this, “History through and through” (IOG 152) and “historicity is prescribed for Being” (IOG 152)

very existence without the temporalisation of history at its (deferred) 'core', the illusion of separateness ceases to interfere. Being, which is historical being and hence *delayed*, appears to the transcendental subject, because it is native to the subject. This is only the case in a rigorous and critical phenomenology such as Husserl's, which is why "It is in this respect that all philosophical discourse must derive its authority from phenomenology." (IOG 150)

## 5 – The Meaning of Destruction and Irrecusability of Presence (*Heidegger: La Question de l'Être et de l'Histoire*)

### *a. Destruction as Confirmation*

The meaning of Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, of what is, to paraphrase from Rogues, 'more and less serious than critique', appears in the 1964/65 seminar maybe more clearly than anywhere else, but in his description of what Heidegger is doing with his destruction of metaphysics. In this chapter I want to show why destruction of metaphysics is not a refutation; why it is not even an overcoming; why it must confirm the priority of the present; and why it is necessary even though it may seem after all not to be doing anything.

It is in the relationship of destruction to the metaphysics of presence that is its target that the need for something other than critique (and refutation), and something other than crisis, appears most clearly as a consequence of the absolute privilege of presence. It is because of the present's absolute irrecusability (see HQ 210) that a method other than critique is necessary, and that refutation will prove impossible. This irrecusability is why the relationship goes beyond mere ambiguity—"Au moment même où Heidegger détruit la métaphysique, il doit la confirmer" (227: "At the same moment when Heidegger destructs metaphysics, he must confirm it"). It isn't merely a toleration of metaphysics—the dependence upon metaphysics is invariant and must be confirmed.

Derrida shows how novel Heidegger's destructive gesture is by comparing it with Hegel's. Hegel's refutation avoids the rejection of what it refutes by regionalising the refuted position—by becoming incorporated into the position that refutes it the refutatum is retained. Only its validity claim—its claim to the generality of its validity—is denied. Destruction goes even further than this—it is of what cannot be rejected and can't even be sublated in the Hegelian sense, because it, together with its truth, validity and generality, are undeniable. Even the scope and validity of the consideration of being as presence that Heidegger wants to destroy is confirmed. How is this possible? Derrida goes so far as to claim that it is not even an *overcoming* of metaphysics (see HQ 213). Not a refutation, nor an overcoming. How is this, an intervention that takes nothing away, possible and what is its motivation?

Following Husserl, Derrida recognizes the absolute privilege of presence: “The living present is, he says, the absolute form... of experience” (HQ 210) because “it is evident, it is evidence itself, that no experience is ever lived except in the present” (HQ 210). This closely resembles what he writes in *Voice*: “within philosophy there is no possible objection concerning this privilege of the present-now; it defines the very element of philosophical thought, it is evidence itself, conscious thought itself, it governs every possible concept of truth and sense.” (SP 62) No argument is given to back up this claim, nor is any necessary—when Derrida writes that it is evidence itself that the present is the fundamental form of experience he is appealing to the necessity of having any experience in the present, and to the absolute impossibility of imagining an experience that is not present. The basic and non-derivable necessity of it confirms Sylvia Plath’s claim; “Nothing is real except the present” (Plath, *Journals* 10).

Indeed, it is Husserl’s recognition of the present as the irrecusable venue of all experience that allows him to account for historicity in the most rigorous way possible—within the epoch of metaphysics—as a confirmed and unapologetic modification of experience, of present experience. Derrida writes: “For Husserl, as for Hegel moreover, there is no historicity but in so far as the past or the origin can be made present, can be transmitted” (HQ 211). By acknowledging what is due the priority of the present, the meaning of the past, the only possible meaning of the past, can be investigated.

When Foucault disparages “the surreptitious practice of historians, their pretension to examine things furthest from themselves, the groveling manner in which they approach this promising distance (like the metaphysicians who proclaim the existence of an afterlife, situated at a distance from this world, as a promise of their reward)” (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 89) what he is bemoaning is the historians’ concealment of their own present, their failure to recognize “knowledge as perspective” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 90). With an ambition that Foucault would still reject as surreptitious in its own right, this is precisely what a transcendental phenomenology of history aims at. It is the reason Husserl’s notion of a *Rückfrage* has the recognition of the position from which the questioning is performed at its centre.

As I explained earlier, *Rückfrage* is a “regressive inquiry” or “inquiry back into” (UG 158), which describes the essentially backwards-looking attitude of the *Origin* and the *Crisis*. For history to be critical, self-reflexive, and to adequately ground itself in the determination of the conditions and structures of historicity itself, awkwardly enough, it cannot confine itself to the lone dimension of the past—it requires the retrospective of a present from

which to launch any regressing inquiry (*Rückfrage*). Husserl suggests that historical inquiry would be circular, or a “zigzag pattern” (Crisis 58): “The understanding of the beginnings is to be gained fully only by starting with science as given in its present-day form, looking back at its development.” (Crisis 58) In his introduction to the *Origin*, Derrida commends this program in strong terms: he calls this “only the pure form of every historical experience” (IOG 51)

The “being all at once temporal and intemporal and omnitemporal” (212) of the present, is no different for history: Derrida notes that for Husserl “the condition of history is a certain ahistoricity of history” (HQ 212). This ‘certain ahistoricity’ (which is not absolute ahistoricity) is the necessity of the persistence of ideal objects that are ‘omnitemporal’ in that they can be “transmitted as the same” (HQ 212) through time. Without the persistence of such omnitemporal ideas, there could be no historicity, no time except the present (which wouldn’t even be a present), and no possibility of the genealogical—no sense of having come from something. In the *Introduction*, Derrida praises Husserl’s phenomenology of history for disclosing the conditions of existence of “a pure historicity” (IOG 66): “they are nothing *but* the pure possibilities *of* the appearance *of* history *as such*, outside which there is nothing” (IOG 66). In terms of the explanation of the possibility of the appearance of historicity, Derrida comes down hard on the side of the irremissibility of the *a priori* of history; the connection through invariant transmission to history as that which makes it possible, conceding that it does not become any less historical for all that. Historical objects “refer to *concrete* acts *lived* in a unique system of instituting implications” (IOG 65). That is to say, they are not mere examples or possibilities—what is determined through ideal investigation is the historical certainty of what *must have* occurred. What is this but true historicity, as Derrida says: “These then are the *interconnections-of* what is, in the fullest sense of the word, *history itself*.” (IOG 65)

Derrida was still committed to his analysis of Husserlean transcendental phenomenology of history a few years later in the 1964/65 seminar, which is why he concedes that “the philosophies of the Present, philosophy itself, can very well and with good, strong reasons demand for itself access to historicity” (215) and that “There would not be history without present, without the chain of transmissibility assured by the formal identity of the presence of the present.” (216) Indeed, he confirms his attachment to the phenomenology of history in somewhat stronger language than he ever used in his *Introduction*.

Of course, if a fully adequate philosophy of history was to have been achieved by Husserl (and Hegel), Derrida would not have said that in Heidegger for the first time being is thought historically (see HQ 50), nor would he have ever had occasion to have taught this seminar. Moreover, it is clear from the start, in the discussion of the difference between destruction and refutation in the first session, that a history the appearance of which is secured in the ahistoricity of ideal objectivity, that history in this sense is nothing like what is at issue in the ‘question’. This is all more or less obvious. Thus, given that Derrida from the start rejected refutation because “If one can refute, it is because the truth can be established once and for all as an object and that nothing but conceptions of truth belong to history, more or less valid approximations of this ahistoric truth” (HQ 24-25) it is obvious that when he then starts to commend, in his strongest language yet, Husserl’s phenomenology of history for determining the conditions of possibility of history in the omnitemporal persistence of ideal objects, that there must be a limit to the success of this account of history. The claim that for refutation to mean anything an ‘anti-historical metaphysics’ must be in place implies that the history at question must be history which disrupts, rather than supports, truth. If not ‘ahistorical’ truth must at least be ‘omnitemporal’ in the sense of persisting through history.

And yet, Derrida told his students that “The living Present is, [Husserl] says, the absolute form, absolutely universal and unconditioned, of experience” (HQ 210). It is clear that this is not a curio or artefact that should be relegated to the history of philosophy—Derrida has signed on to this absolute claim absolutely. It is even formally essential to understanding the question at hand, as he makes clear (“And this Husserlean affirmation must first be understood in its philosophical invulnerability to properly grasp the audacity of the Heideggerian gesture.” [HQ 210]). This is worth repeating because it emphasizes that what Husserl has established about the necessity of a certain priority of the present as the condition for the experience of historicity, and of a continuity of ideal objectivity as the condition for history of any kind is not a mere possibility, not a way that we could, if we chose, account for history. It is *the* way that experience of history is possible—it is impossible to imagine historical experience that did not occur in the present. And therefore historicity as a modification of the present is its essential and only form.

### ***b. Ek-Static Temporality and Experience***

The motivation for destroying the present's priority in the account of history is nearly as compelling, however. Historicity disappears as soon as the present is called in as a condition of history. As a modification it is reduced to presence, to a kind of presence, no matter what priorities it can then exert for itself as the condition for the appearance of things. Derrida writes: "At the same moment where one pretends to render it possible or respect it, as for Hegel and Husserl, by showing the absolute present as a condition of the historical linking and of traditionality, one reduces history." (HQ 213) The judgment that follows is severe—the attempt by Husserl (and Hegel) to take into account what makes historical appearance possible, motivated as it is by the resistance to a dogmatic and naïve presupposition and simultaneous concealment of present perspective, nevertheless fails to let history appear. All that appears is presence, various modifications of presence. The reason that this is insufficient if the historicity of being is to be disclosed, is simply that as long as it is understood as a modification of presence, history is reduced, and in reduction made something it is not. It is a denaturing reduction. This dissimulation (and this is the condemning judgment) is "not the act of a philosopher" (HQ 213). Not the act of a philosopher! Because it calls something (presence) what it is not (history). The judgment may be too severe—Derrida in that very session repeats that the reduction to the present is irrecusable.

And yet, it is not mere provocation—if history is merely the name for a kind of presentation, so to speak, a present appearance with a certain flavor of 'pastyness', then what is missed is nothing less than the *difference* between present and past. Whatever history owes to the present to allow it to appear, it cannot mean anything if it is not of a past that is different from the present in at least this: that it *is not* the present. And this not-presentness is exactly what is taken away from it in its reduction to appearance. What is nearly as incontrovertible as presence as the time of appearance is the necessity of history to be of a temporality that is not present. It is only *nearly* as incontrovertible because it is not absolutely certain that any such thing as a past that is other than present exists or is meaningful in a phenomenological sense (therefore, meaningful at all).

What is certain, though, is that being appears as historical. Indeed, even Plath's line that was so definitive in its exclusive bestowal of existence upon the present undermines itself as it continues: "Nothing is real except the present, and already, I feel the weight of centuries smothering me." (Plath, *Journals* 10) To put it even more strongly, I mentioned

already that Derrida acknowledges, giving credit to Husserl's living present, that the present is 'the absolute form of experience itself'; cannot just the same claim be made on behalf of historicity? True, that "no experience is lived except in the present" (HQ 210) has an immediacy which is not matched by what can be said of historicity—that "no experience is ever lived except as having a historical density, so to speak"—there is the necessary inclusion of an 'as' that at least doesn't seem to be a necessary inclusion of the ineluctability of the present (no doubt, Derrida could ferret it out). And yet historical depth is just as resistant to elimination in an imagining—we can no more imagine an experience in which everything intended comes into being all at once and at that instant than we can an experience that is not lived in the present.

Derrida asks us to join him in wondering "if the evidence of the Presence of the Present does not return [*renvoie*] to a meaning of experience of which the historicity, that is to say the character as past, would be the very same which, determining meaning in the presence of the present, would radically and definitively escape the form of the present itself." (HQ 213–14) This would not be, then, an experience of history, but the historicity of experience. It would be the historical being of experience itself, which would upset the possibility endemic to the experience of history, of a stable and in a sense atemporal perspective to which the historical might appear, a sterilized object. Rather, what "would itself escape radically and definitively the form of the present" (HQ 214) is not the experience, or even its meaning. Both experience and meaning are rooted in a present that they can never escape, let alone radically and definitively so. Rather, that which is historical is the meaning of the experience! The difference here is subtle but profound; it is not an experience of historicity that is returned to in the 'presence of the present', but a historicity of experience, to be precise, a historicity of the meaning of experience. A priority that is not the priority of presence, which is itself only confirmed in the experience of the historical, is announced in the historicity of experience. What Derrida is suggesting is a certain historicity of the meaning of experience itself to which "the evidence of the presence of the present" (HQ 213) returns.

The experience of the historical, as for instance an experience of the geometrical object given in terms of its reference to its origin, only confirms the priority of the living present in which that experience is constituted. On the other hand, the historicity of experience—any banal experience will do as an example, so take the familiar one of Husserl's desk—introduces a priority other than that of the present, a historical priority



upon which the experience itself, and not only its (historical) object, is conditional. The historicity of experience, as opposed to the experience of historicity, if such a thing is disclosed in evidence, would disclose a historicity other than that which affirms “infinity and eternity as the foundation of sense and possibly of the historicity of sense” (HQ 214). The experience of history as a modification of presence is the only source of access to the essential historicity of objects of experience. Whether the object of experience is the perfect sphere or Husserl’s ‘life and blood’ desk, the irrecusable certainty of the presence of any time in which it appears, that any time in which it ever appeared or will appear will be or will have been present, ensures a certain historicity of the object of experience, which is to say; that it persists in time and had an origin in time, a time which was, it is absolutely certain, present at the time. This certainty of the presence of the present—of “the a priori necessity of the living Present is the possibility of a temporalisation without me” (HQ 214)—is the condition of possibility for the experience of history.

The historicity of experience, on the other hand, is the ineluctable historicity in which experience itself derives its meaning—the historicity, that is, that gives experience meaning. While the experience of historicity is the experience of a pre-existence and origin-ality of objects of sense, the historicity of experience is the finite, *ek-static* temporality that gives experience meaning. That is to say, the irreducible historicity of the meaning of experience is the being in relation to birth and death without which no experience as such could ever exist. The experience of a historical object—Husserl’s writing desk—which is only ever given as present, Derrida asks us to consider (but it is not us he asks, he never seemed to mean for us, in 2015, to read these words, neither in 1965 nor at any point thereafter), refers to a historicity which gives the experience, and in a sense its content, meaning, yet cannot be reduced to the (present) structure of experience itself. The meaning of experience is historical in that it derives from the finite temporality of the experiencing being—Dasein, namely its being-towards-death and “a certain relation to birth” (HQ 214).

If I have set this up in such a way as to make what I am calling the experience of history and the historicity of experience appear to be opposite sides of the same coin—even counterparts to one another that could be enfolded within the same noetic-noematic analysis, it should be clear that this would be a denial of the contradiction between Heidegger and phenomenology that Derrida is drawing out. Derrida points out that for Heidegger “There is no history if temporality is not finite. Hegel and Husserl were, in a certain way, saying the opposite.” (HQ 215) Whereas the phenomenologist showed that the

ahistoricity and eternity of the present was the condition for the experience of history, Heidegger argued that only the possibility of impossibility—which is to say the anticipation of death as the limit of presence—gives experience meaning.

If the experience of history is the availability of history to a present which is the infinite structure of experience—the absolute and invariable ‘now’ in which everything that happens happens—then far from being able to be the way of appearing of historicity and the counterpart of historical and temporal being, the historicity of experience is the denial of historicity’s finitude. Certainty in the present as the eternal structure of being, as what must belong to any time or being would deny the historicity of experience. The present is the denial of death in the sense that it is what death cannot conquer, because while I can admit that I may die, which is to say that presence will no longer belong to me, I can also be certain that existence will survive my own in the form of the present—the present in which what exists exists. This is why Derrida writes in the margins: “Living Present more fundamental than the *I*.” (HQ 210) Before that, he explains: “And we know *a priori*... as far as one anticipates a future, we know, *a priori*, that in millions and millions of years, if there is an experience, a thought in general (human or not, divine or not, animal or not), it will be in the present, as we are in the present now.” (HQ 210)

The living present, then, is exactly the denial of the significance of death for the structure of being—it makes of death a mere ‘feature’ of the atemporal and immortal present. Death, for the structure of experience, could only be an anticipated present. It would have to be a present that has not yet arrived, but will be present when it comes, if it is anything at all. The present, in its living-ness (and it is here that the ‘life’ of the ‘living present’ takes on renewed significance), dominates the existence of death in the sense that it is only as living that death exists, can be experienced or thought. Is death merely a form of life, a moment in life? If the present exists, with the certainty and atemporality with which it must, then death does not.

Death is not disclosed in an experience of temporality. Experience, and the living present that is its only and invariant form, cannot be the ‘other side of the coin’ of the historicity or temporality of experience inasmuch as the temporality of experience is determined by its being-towards-death. Nor is death mere ‘non-actuality’, as Heidegger explains in §72 of *Being and Time*: “Factual *Dasein* exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death. As long as *Dasein* factically exists, both the ‘ends’ and their ‘between’ *are*” (BT H 374). Death is not something that is not now but is ‘in the offing’.

*Ek-static* temporality, as being-towards-death, is not at all the knowledge that in some present that is not yet actual the moment of my death will come. Among other things, this thinking of temporality on the basis of the priority of the present, the actual, and the instant is a kind of denial of finitude, since it makes awareness of my death dependent upon the possibility of ‘outstripping’ death in imagination. This act of imagination rests in the certainty of the invariability of the present; the invariable necessity that even in my death the structure of being is preserved. The possibility of death is not disclosed, cannot be disclosed, on the basis of the present or a temporality of the present, since there is no present in which death *is*. To put it in my terms—the historicity of experience as being-towards-death is not disclosed by the experience of history.

Historicity, according to Heidegger, is “just a more concrete working out of temporality” (BT H 382), and temporality is Dasein’s finitude—that Dasein is being-towards-death, not as an actuality to come, but as a possibility that it is as long as it is, because of the way its whole existence is taken up in ‘care’, Dasein’s concernfulness for its being: “As care, Dasein *is* the ‘between’” (BT H 374), a between which does not exclude the ‘ends’. Being is temporal because of *Care* as the “ontological meaning of Dasein’s Being” (BT H 323). This is to say nothing less than that meaning itself is in care and the temporality that belongs to it. In other words, anything meaningful is meaningful because it is ‘given’ meaning by care in care’s temporal structure.

Heidegger explains that *things* are meaningful when “they have become accessible *in their Being*” (BT H 324). Indeed, that which makes meaning is what being is for Heidegger; this is perhaps the most robust way of reading the definition put in the introduction to *Being and Time*: “Being—that which determines entities as entities” (BT H 6). Because of the *Daseinsanalytik*, the inquiry into being through the interrogation of Dasein, that shapes *Being and Time*, the ‘accessibility’ of things that makes them meaningful; their ‘givenness’; and the way in which they are ‘given’, is essential to their meaningfulness. This ‘givenness’ and ‘accessibility’ must not be understood, as it often is, as a parasitical phenomenality, a ‘mere’ appearance that introduces distortion or the possibility of distortion. Heidegger’s analysis here is profoundly phenomenological—it is the being of entities itself which is accessible, which is revealed in the interrogation of Dasein. This is why Heidegger emphasizes that not only have things become accessible, “they have become accessible *in their Being*” (BT H 324).

Accessibility not being a mere aftereffect, but the way of being of beings, the question of being must attend to the way in which being is made accessible, and this is

through care. Care might be described in a non-Heideggerean fashion as what makes being a 'self' possible, but because there is no self without being-in-the-world, this can't be understood in a monadic or Cartesian sense. We might more accurately say that 'self' is the ontic thing made sense of existentially by care. In more Heideggerean terms, care is the "potentiality-for-being-a-whole" (BT H 303) of Dasein—the possibility of projecting "existential phenomena upon the existentiell possibilities which have been delineated in them, and 'think these possibilities through to the end' in an existential manner" (BT H 302–03). In care, Dasein can be the whole that it is without its reduction to an object present-at-hand: Dasein "cannot be pieced together into something present-at-hand out of pieces which are present-at-hand." (BT H 302)

Heidegger notes that historicity is what determines the concrete character of finitude. Being-towards-death determines only finitude itself as a sort of empty generality: "One's anticipatory projection of oneself on that possibility of existence which is not to be outstripped—on death—guarantees only the totality and authenticity of one's resoluteness." (BT H 383) In Being-towards-death and Dasein's authentic being-a-whole, "*temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way*" (BT H 304) in which death and the future are not mere moments to come, less actual than the present moment. In care, a certain priority of the future determines the primordial temporal experience. Heidegger writes: "Being-towards-death is possible only as something *futural*." (BT H 325) Care involves the being "thought through to the end" (BT H 305) because care concerns the being-whole of Dasein. It is in terms of its futurity that Dasein is its past or 'having-been', and yet its 'having-been' is essential to its futurity: "Only in so far as Dasein *is* as an 'I-am-as-having-been', can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes *back*." (BT H 325–26)

Thus, temporality, specifically the *Ek-static* temporality of care in which death *is* as a possibility, is the structure of existence. Historicity is what works out the actual character of existence, and the possibilities that make it what it is. Because existence is finite its possibilities are finite, and what they are and what they are not—that is to say, the being-towards-death of Dasein—is what history is. The general form of futurity belongs to Dasein because of its being-towards-death, while the particular character of Dasein in each case is given in its history. Death and history make Dasein finite in this way, and meaning is in the care that takes in the whole of Dasein's finite being.

But what is this ‘meaning’? In phenomenological fashion, one is tempted to respond that it is the meaning of experience, since only what is in principle capable of being experienced can be meaningful. If this were the case, then indeed it would be as though the experience of history and the historicity of experience were complementary, two sides of the same coin, —as though experience is historical in its structure and that historical structure is given in experience. There would be no need for the destruction of the metaphysics of presence in that case; but merely a working out of presence’s meaning.

The irremissibility of presence for experience—that presence is experience itself—would pervert the meaning of historicity, however. In historicity, existence is in structures that are not nor could ever become, present. Death is not a state of affairs that will or could become actual, and yet it belongs to existence. The historicity of experience, then, means that historicity is not the correlative of experience, but its limit and destruction. Historicity does not explain and undergird experience—rather, it shatters its certainty in the eventual presence of all existence.

Does that mean that experience does not exist? Of course not. This is why the destruction of metaphysics is not a refutation. Although historicity and experience are not simply counterparts, the historicity which will destroy the infinite certainty of the living present still owes a priority to the present. If it did not, Heidegger would merely have performed, would have been able to perform, a refutation. It would merely have been a matter of displacing the metaphysics of presence and asserting *ek-static* temporality as the only authentic structure of existence. On that basis, present experience could be subsumed within the *ek-static* being-towards-the-end without any caveats. However, temporality is after all phenomenologically given, which is to say it is experienced.<sup>83</sup> There is a phenomenologicality that is never given over by Heidegger, and the necessity of experience reasserts the priority of the present as the ineluctable modality of the experience.

Rather than correlates, the historicity of experience and the experience of history belong to each other in a way that anticipates Derrida’s signature relation—the condition of impossibility—they rely on each other and yet each of them resists the priority claimed by the other for itself. While it is interesting to note this, the clearest sense of the relationship between historicity and experience can be made with a model Derrida had already used to describe history and its relationship to ideality in Husserl in the *Introduction*—a *wechselspiel*, or interplay, between counterposed reductions.

Insofar as experience is historical it is dominated by *ek-static* temporality and being-towards-death, which is to say, the present possesses no priority but is made possible and meaningful because of its own being-towards-an-end. The absolute priority of presence demanded by experience, which involves the certainty in the infinite presence of the present—that whenever there is an experience, which is to say anything at all, it will be in the present, is reduced to the finitude of being-towards-death and the constitution of existence in the possibility of death. Heidegger writes; “*temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way*” (BT H 304) But the primordial way that temporality gets experienced reduces experience itself. Put another way: as temporality is experienced, experience itself gives over its primordially to temporality.

On the other hand, as history and temporality are structures which are experienced, their *ek-static*-ness is reduced to present appearance. As an experience, history and even temporality as being-towards-death are structures which belong to the present. They are structures which are given to experience—the finitude of existence belongs to the present, as does the very absence that constitutes it. In this way, temporality is inevitably reduced to experience and its domination by the present. This contradicts the intent if not always the expression of Heidegger. But experience as the way in which temporality is disclosed seems to be acknowledged, at the very least by the extensive discussion of experience. Experience has its priority, as Derrida asserts;

*Sein und Zeit*, in this sense, announces the end of this epoch, but still belongs to it in that the historicity it describes, it describes, without a doubt, in the horizon, at this time explicit, of being—and that is the progress: the question of being is put as such from the first pages of *Sein und Zeit*. But—and this is in which it still remains in the epoch of metaphysics—the description of historicity in *Sein und Zeit* still concerns the historicity of a form of being; being as Dasein. This is still in a certain sense history as experience (in a sense that after all still holds to phenomenology—that of Hegel or that of Husserl).

(HQ 217)

There is a sense in which the present is, as Derrida said in the eighth session constituted “as the past of a future, which is to say living the present not as origin and absolute form of experience (of *ek-sistence*), but as the product, the constituted, the derived, the constituted in turn starting from the horizon of the future and the *ek-sistence* of the future...” (HQ 276), but the constituted present presupposes a constituting present in turn.

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<sup>83</sup> “temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way” (BT H 304)

Destruction in Heidegger is described by Derrida as a confirmation of metaphysics—the necessity of the phenomenological and the structure of experience is something that must be acknowledged. And yet, for Heidegger, especially in his formulations after the *Kebrre*, there is often a suggestion of leaving the metaphysics of presence behind.

As confirming the irrecusability of presence, the destruction of metaphysics of presence sets up a dynamic for which there can be no consistent and stable overview between experience and history. The recognition of each of them requires, in its way, the reduction of the other. And for each of these it is a reduction which is not benign—reduction which dissimulates what is essential to history or to experience (namely, in the case of which, its incompatibility with being reduced by the other), as the case may be. And yet the necessity of both history and experience, and their dependence upon each other, is obvious.

Again, this interplay is recognisable as a condition of impossibility. But it is more richly accounted for in the terms Derrida used to explain the relationship between the eidetic reduction and history in. In the *Introduction* Derrida describes this as an interplay between reductions. In this case, we could call the reductions the phenomenological and the historical. The ‘interplay’ does not occur on the level of experience or history, because each reduces the other and thereby inoculates itself from the influence of it. However, there is interplay for the philosopher attempting to account for them. It is this interplay that is the interplay between destruction and confirmation, that distinguishes fundamental ontology from another system, come to refute what stood before it.

## 6 – History and Infinite Difference

### (Voice and Phenomenon)

Commencing the ultimate chapter of *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida describes his reading of Husserl as “a reading that can be simply neither that of commentary nor that of interpretation” (VP 75), as Lawlor renders “une lecture qui ne peut être simplement ni celle du commentaire ni celle de l’interprétation” (Voix 98). David B. Allison’s translation renders the phrase using the same vocabulary of ‘commentary’ and ‘interpretation’ (see SP 88). These translations respect the cognates and demands that we allow the English word ‘commentary’ to have the sense that the French ‘*commentaire*’ accommodates somewhat more readily and that the context of contrast from ‘*interprétation*’ implies—a commentary which consists not merely of a neutral explication, but critical-evaluative analysis. Derrida reiterates again and again that his aim is not simple—that his discourse is at every step dependent on phenomenology and at exactly the same time puts in doubt the deriving of the infinite and the absent from the fullness of evidence that ground the transcendental approach (the latter being Derrida’s famous deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence). problematises the whole approach. This double gesture is familiar from Derrida’s work and attitude. In the recently published 1964–65 ENS seminar *Heidegger: La question de l’Être et de l’Histoire*, this ambivalence appears as a theme—it describes Heideggerean destruction of the history of metaphysics: “La destruction n’est ni une réfutation ni une annihilation” (HQEH 226: “destruction is neither a refutation nor an annihilation”). The publication of Derrida’s explicit and straightforward discussion of the conflict between a philosophical ‘irreducibility’ of the present as the locus of evidence, epitomised by Husserlian phenomenology, and Heidegger’s thought of “*L’historicité elle-même*” (213: “historicity itself”), which is to say a historicity which is not reduced to the present, makes new insights into his engagements with both philosophers possible, one which sheds light on those in his published work of the same period, especially *Voice*. The ambivalence Derrida expresses here with respect to the fruitfulness and phenomenological resources of a Heideggerean essential link between history and being resembles the ambivalence he expressed with respect to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology in *Voice*. The impossibility of a straightforward refutation or even overcoming of philosophy as metaphysics, even in its closure, preoccupies Derrida throughout this period of his



scholarship. The ambivalence that compels the gestures of deconstruction is more evident than ever in these seminars, in which it is clearly drawing from both a Heideggerean thinking and from a Heideggerean attitude, at once polemical and all-encompassing, to and of the history of metaphysics.

The tension appears most starkly in a single paragraph on page 82 when Derrida announces that in view of the critique which I will go on to examine “no pure transcendental reduction is possible” (VP 71), but although this condemnation ought to doom the entire phenomenological enterprise, he claims, with the same assurance and gravity, that “it is necessary to pass through the reduction” (VP 71, “*il faut passer par elle*” [Voix 92]) in order for the critique and what makes reduction impossible to reveal itself. There is no doubt but that the confutation (*commentaire*) of phenomenology is only possible within the discourse of phenomenology, that is, only if it is a faithful ‘*interprétation*’. This is why the reading can be neither simply one nor the other. Despite Derrida’s spatial metaphor, there is in a very important sense no leaving the reduction behind, in the sense of emerging from it with meaning and truth intact—discourse, as discourse, which must to some extent dominate Derrida’s reading, remains attached to phenomenology and the reduction in what Derrida determines as its ‘closure’, in much the same way as it did in the end of the *Introduction*.

But what is the meaning of this attachment, and of this ‘passing through’? What is the relation of phenomenology, and particularly of its claim to dominate philosophy, to destruction, deconstruction, and the *outside*? Derrida’s text aims at something beyond mere critique, something at once more radical and more faithful. Is it Derrida’s decision, or a consequence of engaging with the father of phenomenology? The paradox, perhaps, derives from the impossibility of a straightforward fidelity to Husserl and to his critique. A simple avowal of critique, one that would be uncritical of it, is impossible, of course, but so is a simple rejection of it (a rejection which if it had any basis at all would only affirm critique itself). This is what Derrida will thematise later, in “Plato’s Pharmacy” as the “necessity and inevitability of parricide” (PP 162) as it arises in Parmenidean philosophy and Plato’s *Sophist*. It is the impossibility of acceding to the father’s discriminations without catching him, or at least some potent part of him, on the point of that scalpel.

We must ask ourselves, after Maupassant, “what would we do with this parricide?” (de Maupassant, *Original Short Stories*, 271)<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, perhaps the manoeuvre is

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<sup>84</sup> Or, ‘what would we make of this parricide’—“Que ferions-nous de ce parricide?” (Maupassant, *Contes et Nouvelles* 559)

freer than that, perhaps it derives from the desire expressed in *Rogues* at the other end of Derrida's career to bring into question the hegemony of critique; "Perhaps we might try to think, on the contrary, something other than a crisis." (Rogues 124) Something other than crisis, "a tremor at once more and less serious" (Rogues 124), and something that calls for a reading that is other than *critique*.

This chapter consisting of two sections presents and explains Derrida's hallmark idea of *différance* as it both relates to and is anticipated in Husserlian phenomenology, and how the logical difficulties of a thinking of infinite difference indicates a certain *closure* of history and phenomenology that pushes us into the open question of an origin history cannot unearth, in the ontological question as to the 'why' of it. And yet phenomenology remains relevant—remains *the* relevant philosophical enquiry.

The first section—"Deconstruction of phenomenology, or deconstructive phenomenology?"—returns to the hints in the last chapter that delay was not only delay but involved an equiprimordial spacing and difference. As I showed in the last chapter this is already hinted at, but of course it becomes a much more fully worked-out hypothesis in *Voice and Phenomenon* and in other texts of that period, especially the text which takes its name for what this observation leads to; "Différance"<sup>85</sup>. Even though its chief claims with regard to Husserl were already put in the *Introduction* as indications of the capacity of transcendental phenomenology to account for difference, when it reemerges in *Voice* it is in a much more critical mode in which the originality of *différance* is put as an objection to the 'pre-expressive core of sense' which Derrida claims Husserl relies upon. I will raise objections to this critique by adhering to the reading of the ideal core of sense as coherent possibilities of ideality, according to which the idea of a pre-expressive core is neither necessary nor plausible.

In the second section, "Death and the infinite", I will return to the question of the act, subjectivity, and the living present, which likewise revisits themes already raised in the *Introduction* and in my chapter on it. Here again my method is to return to the radical interpretation of Husserl given by Derrida in the *Introduction*, and my own interpretation of Husserl on the basis of, I think, shared priorities in terms of grounding phenomenology

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<sup>85</sup> Not being a word, as Derrida attests, '*différance*' is frequently left untranslated by Derrida's translators—Alan Bass makes this choice in his translation of the lecture "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* and Leonard Lawlor also leaves it in the French in *Voice and Phenomenon*. In my discussion I've opted to translate it following David B. Allison as "différance" and to distinguish it from "difference" either by italicisation or commentary where potential for confusion exists.

without deriving “difference from the fullness of a *parousia*” (VP 87), but maintaining an infinite difference as the many-chambered heart of transcendentalism. In *Voice*, Derrida describes an opposing tendency to that which I have emphasised and tried to establish in self-sufficiency (ironically) in Husserl’s thought, which aims at an original starting place of positivity and fullness at the core of the subjective act, the living present, and infinity itself. Ultimately, the reason fullness is necessary is because the infinite as such is not thinkable without betraying its own logic. It is only a positive infinite—the absolute—the idea of which is not logically inconceivable—yet such an infinity is only possible given fullness of a positive, which the primordial difference our interpretation of transcendentalism reflects cannot derive from, at least not directly. The way to the thinkability of infinite difference is through the death of the positive infinite, and that in turn indicates the closure of science.

Although it may seem odd to discuss *Voice and Phenomenon* in this context without elaborating the structure of Derrida’s deconstruction of experience in transcendental phenomenology on the basis of its presupposition of a pre-expressive core of sense, that is what I mean to do. This argument is not only the core of the text, it is widely considered crucial to the development of Derrida’s philosophy and of his relationship to Husserl, and in a sense it is profoundly germane to my discussion of the possibility of truth coming to be in history, because it brings into question the self-identity of sense that would be the basis for the possibility of truth. On what grounds then, do I exclude or even merely gloss over this important topic? The deconstruction/destruction of presence that is at issue here has already been conceded—it is the status of this deconstruction and the status of presence in the light of it that is now in question. While it is important to look at Derrida’s problematisation of sense here, this has already been done extensively. Key scholarship in this area includes Claude J. Evans’ *Strategies of Deconstruction*; and Bernard Dauenhauer’s “On Speech and Temporality: Derrida and Husserl.” Derrida himself also revisits the theme of auto-affection in Husserl in chapter eight of *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*. As it is I have attempted to look at history as what concerns both Derrida and Husserl, and not to go into the important and difficult questions raised by voice and auto-affection. I hope I have succeeded in proving the feasibility of this project, partial though it may be, by showing the importance of history in Derrida’s work on Husserl and the development of his own ideas. I will give a brief précis of this topic by way of introducing *Voice*, but what I will avoid doing for the sake of the integrity of this thesis is going into a sustained argument about the way it obtains with regards to Husserl and its meaning for his philosophy.

### ***a. Deconstruction of Phenomenology, or Deconstructive Phenomenology?***

If delay/deferral was in *Introduction*, the book without a name about a book without a name, a radical interpretation of Husserl's philosophy of history which 'merely' explicated the necessarily *infinite* nature of that history, in *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida pulls at the individual strands or filaments ('*fil*s', as he points out, again in *Pharmacy*) interwoven in the phenomenology of history some more until the way infinite history and deferral calls for an equally radical intervention in spatiality, and therefore identity is revealed as a more disturbing development than it appeared in the gestures toward it in the *Introduction*. Here the impossibility of the confinement of the constituted complexity of the living present to a temporality of deferral and its creation of difference in the temporo-spatiality and disruption of identity of fundamental *différance* is explained thematically, rather than merely alluded to. Along with the claim that the temporal delay could be more readily accommodated by phenomenology comes the criticism that the spatiality of a difference at the constitution of the present is problematic for Husserl's system.

Nevertheless, even in light of the further disruption wrought by bringing deferral together with *différance* in *différance*, the consequence of Derrida's more original intercession is overwhelmingly consistent with the ambiguous significance of the *Introduction*—phenomenology is not free from self-destruction, but neither can it be simply dismissed. Deconstruction, which with the outlining of the movements of *différance* and trace is by the writing of *Voice and Phenomenon* in 1968 almost completely anticipated, does not replace or subvert phenomenology or introduce some new science or realm of being which phenomenology falls short of. We have to say, in some sense, that when we are being deconstructive we are doing phenomenology, even though when we are being deconstructive we are problematising phenomenology, only because when we are being deconstructive we must problematise deconstruction and because to do phenomenology is to bring into question the possibility of doing phenomenology. The understanding of what Derrida insists is not a technique but which can also never give rise to a movement, depends on this.

The question which orients *Voice and Phenomenon* is the same as that which orients the *Introduction* and the *Origin* itself, and which Derrida claims comprises transcendental enquiry as such (see IOG 153)—the question of origin in the temporal sense and at the same time in the sense of fundamental and instituting principles, senses which, in the aftermath of Husserl’s claim that “The ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation and historical, even humanistic-psychological explanation, between epistemological and genetic origin, is fundamentally mistaken” (IOG 172), are one and indivisible. Nevertheless, *Voice* is entirely original. In *Voice*, the origin under investigation is conceived as the origin of meaning and sense (which is again not outside the realm in which it is conceived in the *Origin*). Since the introduction of the concept in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, Husserl had used ‘the living present’ to describe the irreducible temporal complexity and constitutedness of the absolutely constituting moment of experience—the origin of being (see Husserl, *Time Consciousness* §11). At the end of his *Introduction*, Derrida explains how the constituted complexity of the constituting moment of intuition incorporates already at the source of self and sameness and the very atomic core of experience the phenomena of alterity, as they will later take form in his own discourses on *other people* (in the fifth meditation) and on other epochs (in the *Crisis* and especially in the *Origin* itself), within the basic self-identity of the transcendental ego (though Husserl never explicitly thematises the derivation of alterity on the basis of primordial alterity, as Derrida points out). The temporality of the fundamentally temporal root of intentionality is revealed in this analysis to not itself derive from a still more fundamental core of presence but from infinite passage and deferral, that is from what also makes history possible. Far from history being rooted in the present a primordial deferral is the ‘origin’ of both. It is perhaps closer to the truth (though not precise) to say that the present is rooted in history, though not in a material sense but in its essence as a present that *is* the past retained.<sup>86</sup> Even in the *Introduction*, Derrida, however briefly indicates the impossibility of isolating temporal extension from spatial extension, and of distinguishing difference in time from difference in the subject whose time it is, which is why he characterises intentionality itself as “the going out from self to self of the Absolute of the Living Present” (IOG 150).

This was ‘merely’ a radical interpretation of what was already implied in the irreducible extension of the ‘now’—it is deferral of itself, prior to any constituted self-

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<sup>86</sup> “The present appears neither as the rupture nor the effect of a past, but as the retention of a present past” (IOG 57)

presence. Having embarked patiently and painstakingly on an itinerary in the *Introduction*, Derrida proceeds much further, much faster, in *Voice*. It is not merely that Derrida continues on in the same direction—it is a re-embarkation in the same direction from the same starting position.

Thus, deferral is tantamount to difference, and where there is time there is always space, but, according to Derrida in *Voice*, this constitutes a major discovery whereas the ‘delay’ interpretation was ‘merely’ a radical interpretation. On this basis (among others) Derrida launches his idea of *différance*, a ‘concept’ (that is not a concept) much more disruptive for Husserlian phenomenology than the delay the latter had already anticipated. Here, the philosophical/anti-philosophical movement *deconstruction* is under way.

Because it retraces familiar ground, the argument as to the spatiality of delay is not difficult to follow. Time—the temporality which in the living present and in Derrida’s earlier treatment of it described the self-relation which constitutes the transcendental ego as the source of experience—Derrida here describes as a metaphor for what he calls very provisionally “this ‘movement’” and “trace”<sup>87</sup> (VP 73). But time is a problematic metaphor, because it talks about movement “in the very terms that movement makes possible” (SP 85 [see VP 73]). There is thus great risk of conflation. Metaphor is necessary, however, because what makes temporality possible essentially has no ‘determinate being’<sup>88</sup> and thus can only be spoken of metaphorically. It is a habitual but problematic tendency to use the metaphor closest at hand—the first thing ‘it’ produces; what is only possible because of it. The ‘movement’ that constitutes temporality is not itself temporal—it is of course ‘prior’ to time. While it may not be possible to ascribe to what is in some sense a purity of movement itself a determinate character, it is at least potentially misleading to speak of it in terms of something it makes possible, and particularly to exclude from it what else it makes possible. The substitution of time for the origin of time would not be so misleading in itself did it not efface the coexistence of time with what time as “non-space” (VP 73), for Husserl, suppresses. The auto-affection by which a ‘now’ is affected by “another now” (VP 73) is a ‘trace’ (of the retained ‘now’) which Husserl considered as purely temporal and therefore capable of being united in a ‘living present’ as that which while temporally

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<sup>87</sup> See VP 58: “the trace in the most universal sense, is a possibility that not only must inhabit the pure actuality of the now, but also must constitute it by means of the very movement of the *différance* that the possibility inserts into the pure actuality of the now.”

<sup>88</sup> “As soon as we insert a determinate being into the description of this ‘movement,’ we are speaking by metaphor.” (VP 73)

extended could in its own way be considered self-identical and self-present.<sup>89</sup> Husserl's embrace of time as primordially and fundamentally extended in a way that Derrida will have been able to characterise in perfect harmony<sup>90</sup> with the former as 'delay' and 'deferral' because it did not prioritise an absolute present<sup>91</sup> is here shown to rely on an idea of self-presence in space, and therefore in identity. This in itself would not be so worrying, except that it is, as Derrida demonstrates, unwarranted—the same 'movement' which makes time (and anything at all) possible by 'retaining' the now-become-'non-now' is the movement which makes space and difference possible and in fact introduces space and time ineluctably. The *Introduction*, as I said, alluded to difference bringing space into the constitution of the living present, but read this as an interpretation of the meaning of the living present as the self's "going out from self to self" (IOG 150). Here, in *Voice*, Derrida expands on the same logic, but no longer seems to think that Husserl's transcendental subject can accommodate the difference.

Derrida explains the retentional structure of the living present as the way that a 'now' simultaneously becomes itself and becomes retained, which is to say ceases to be itself, or rather becomes not-itself, to "become a non-now as a past now" (VP 73). The complexity of the living present as the basic unit of experience means that the 'now' must at the same time become and then cease to be *as such* and yet be retained. The retention which makes existence possible Derrida calls auto-affection; "The process by means of which the living now, producing itself by spontaneous generation, must, in order to be a now, be retained in another now, must affect itself, without empirical recourse, with a new originary actuality in which it will become a non-now as a past now, etc." (VP 72–73). In the same moment (or rather, 'movement', since it is not determined in the temporality of a 'moment') in which the identical occurs—in which the now becomes itself—the 'other' is there as a constitutive part of the identity, and yet what it is affected by is nothing other

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<sup>89</sup> Derrida sometimes renders the concept most familiarly called "*lebendige Gegenwart*" as "le présent vivant" [Voix 95], but he also uses "*Le maintenant vivant*" (Voix 94). Even though the term had no priority for Husserl over terms such as 'now' (see ITC 34) or even the lovely term '*Augenblick*' I will stick with the familiarity of the 'living present', in part because it lays bare the implied 'presence' with which Derrida confronts Husserl, raising the question whether the present is really 'there'.

<sup>90</sup> I am deliberately oversimplifying the issue of whether the living present is a prioritisation of the present. Derrida himself, however, will have to concede his doubts as to the temporal purity of the present of the living present at the bottom of page 72 and the top of page 73 of *Voice* in order to explain the structure of retention as forming a 'now'.

<sup>91</sup> And which, as Derrida notes, Heidegger also praised as being the first to depart from the Aristotelian priority of presence; "Heidegger says in *Sein und Zeit* that [the analyses of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*] are the first, in the history of philosophy, to break with a concept of time inherited from Aristotle's *Physics* and determined on the basis of the notions of 'now,' of 'point,' of 'limit,' and of 'circle.'" (VP 52)

than itself. Being retained in another now, the now becomes both now and not-now, all before it has become now. It becomes its own other and in so doing constitutes itself. As Derrida describes it; “such a process is indeed a pure auto-affection in which the same is the same only by affecting itself with an other” (VP 73). And again: “The living present arises on the basis of its non-self-identity, and on the basis of the retentional trace.” (VP 73) Obviously, this movement must be prior to the difference between same and other. Characterised as such, the primordial extension that constitutes the living present is thus not merely (what Derrida characterises here as) the safe, sterile temporal extension which could be understood as confined within a single and self-identical individual; it is also the spatial relation that distances the self from itself in its requisite traversal of distance between the self and the other. Between the ‘now’ and its simultaneous retention as a no-longer-now there is a relation of difference which demands the traversal of space implied in the possibility of relation as auto-affection; relation of a self to its other, or ‘outside’; “Since the trace is the relation of intimacy of the living present to its outside, the openness to exteriority in general, to the non-proper, etc., *the temporalization of sense is from the very beginning ‘spacing.’*” (VP 73)

It is because the self-proximity of auto-affection is essential to the maintenance of sense in expression yet impossible within a supposed pre-expressive ‘core’ of sense, that the interruption by the space of difference is meant to be so destabilising. The pure auto-affection of expression is necessary, Derrida’s interpretation would have it, in order for the pre-expressive core of sense to be possible and to be indicated (without the purity of an expression which sustains the non-limitation of the signifier by the signified in language, the object itself of language would not present itself to us), and such a core is in turn necessary for expression as well. There is indeed no expression without an object to be expressed, just as there is no object without the pure possibility of its expression. The movement of the trace which is prior to time and space and which constitutes both, introduces difference and the spatiality of an irreducible outside into the initial moment of the constitution of the expression. If expression is possible only in a self-presence from which anything external, anything which would interfere with its universality, has been excluded, then the ‘essential difference’ (see VP 70f) of the auto-affection which comprises the movement of that necessary self-presence must also and at the same time make the absolute self-presence on which it (expression) relies impossible. The dream of the purity of an expression in which the exterior of the sign, the signifier, remains absolutely



mastered by a signified 'core' which reduplicates its object is dashed by Derrida's observation that this dream is only the concealment of its own conditions of possibility.

As a result, the auto-affective *expression* cannot by itself furnish language's essence, and *indication*—the indicative function which, according to Derrida, Husserl's thinking must still relegate to a secondary, non-essential function of language long after the distinction between the two is actually made in *Logical Investigations* because of the demand of auto-affection for the "unproductive redoubling" (VP 27) of *expression*—must be understood to fulfil the *essential* function of language that is *communication*. The essential *difference* of auto-affection demands indication at the origin of expression, in the constitution of the self, which because it is constituted by auto-affection is not constituted by an entirely homogeneous same. A function of indication is essential to the constitution of the object, but indication, Derrida claims, is a duplication which because it is not strictly auto-affective is not pure. Without the purity of unproductive expression as a complete attainment, the object it expresses is not determinable with absolute certainty. But that is still to treat language as a latecomer to consciousness. The situation would be even more serious, because the object itself is not, by necessity, experienced outside of the possibility of expression. To put it another way—there is no possible object of experience except that the possibility of expression in language belongs to it.

But is there really supposed to be an objective core or stratum prior to expression? And if so, in what sense? How and in what way is the 'pre-expressive' 'pre-?' The object exists as idea, and as such depends on its coexistence with a whole field of companion idealities, among which are not only language (which we could explain away as being confined to the interiority of expressive language, as per Derrida's—after Husserl's—distinction) but community and history. The possibility of an object is therefore dependent from the start on what is outside of the object and the conscious apprehension thereof by a solitary subject—the world and others. Any supposed priority of the object is nothing but a manner of speaking, perhaps invoked by way of explaining the articulation of ideality's distinct yet interdependent 'parts'. There is no possible object prior to the possibility of language, and therefore it is impossible to speak of "the existence of a pre-expressive and pre-linguistic stratum of sense" (VP 26). The only 'before' that is meaningful with regard to ideality is an essential 'before'—the 'before' which would denote the essential independence that is a consequence of being possible 'before' the possibility of the other. Any non-essential priority, such as for example a factual one, at least

according to Husserl, is of no consequence. This is the case not only for ‘factuality’ in the non-phenomenological sense—the essence of factual priority is inconsequential. The ‘outside’ which Derrida claims Husserl’s account of sense and phenomenological being excludes, thereby confirming “the classical metaphysics of presence” and indicating “that phenomenology belongs to classical ontology” (VP 22)<sup>92</sup>, will always have already been there at the outset in the only way that it ever needs to be ‘there’; as possibility. Derrida emphasises the necessity of the ideal structure of repeatability as a possibility prior to any factual repetition himself on page 58: “The ideality of the form (*Form*) of presence itself implies consequently that it can be repeated to infinity, that its return, as the return of the same, is to infinity necessary and inscribed in presence as such” (VP 58), and again on page 64: “An ideal object is an object whose monstration can be indefinitely repeated” (VP 64).

What Derrida’s indication of this ‘core’ of meaning relied upon by Husserl, and indeed, his entire deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, is concerned with is maintained, rather than challenged, by the structure of possibility. It is a structure that Derrida had the strongest instincts for, as he indicates in his response to John Searle in *Limited inc.*: “I repeat, therefore, since it can never be repeated too often: if one admits that writing (and the mark in general) must be able to function in the absence of the sender, the receiver, the context of production, etc., that implies that this power, this being able, this possibility is always inscribed, hence necessarily inscribed as possibility in the functioning or the functional structure of the mark.” (LI 48) Derrida, as I have shown throughout this thesis, is keenly aware of the resistance to simple priorities throughout Husserl’s thinking; indeed, this is what draws him to Husserl. It is perhaps this careful attention to phenomenology’s resistance to the collapsing of differences which trained Derrida’s ear to a priority never relinquished by Husserl. In that sense, Derrida’s deconstruction is a faithful attention to Husserl’s most radical tendencies and at the same time a profoundly unsettling intervention.

## ***b. Death and the Infinite***

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<sup>92</sup> In fact, Derrida will claim, any account of sense and meaning whatsoever will be bound to this invalid exclusion.

If the incursion of space, world, alterity and the other into sense is problematic, it is because, according to Derrida, sense requires that these externalities must be constituted on the basis of an irreducible subjectivity, that is, the pure auto-affective act of a transcendental subject—that without the act the sense loses its grounding in the apodeicticity of experience, which must have the structure of the transcendental act. The necessity of the factual is not on the side of the object, but on the side of the irreducible subjectivity—without which all of the ideal coherence is meaningless. Without the transcendental ego and its act, all of phenomenology would fall prey to the same objectivism for which Husserl criticises modern science—forgetting the intention that makes it what it is. But the question remains as to how the act must be reclaimed by phenomenological science. Without doubt, the act must be treated and not eliminated as a merely epistemically necessary and imperfect instrument, but does that mean that it must not be reduced to its essence? Indeed, is it possible for science to treat subjectivity without reducing it to an object of study? And is this not adequate for the avoidance of objectivism, that the act is brought into consideration as an object of thought? Is it not an object with the content ‘act’ which is necessary in order to prevent the forgetting of origins and meanings? Does phenomenological certainty require (and, can it attain) the act *as act*, or is it enough for it to turn the act into a content; the subjective into an object?

I explained in the section on the coherence of ideality (in chapter three) that the coherent components of ideality are fundamentally interdependent and that none of them can exist without the other. Their interdependence, because they are idealities, is not factual. It is not a dependence on the factual existence of other idealities, but a dependence on their possibility; they each depend on the pure possibility of the others. What about the subject and the subjective act, however? Is the subjective act different from the coherence of ideality, as the activity in which every ideal capacity must begin to occur, or is it itself an essential possibility of ideality—as it no doubt seems to be in the case of the object’s dependence on the possible subjective act in which the object can be intended, for instance, or a possible speaker by whom language can be spoken. Put another way, in order to bring the dichotomy into relief—is the factuality of the subjective act irreducible, as Derrida maintains, or is it itself an ideal possibility—the possibility of being intended which belongs essentially to the object.

The transcendental function of writing described by Husserl in the *Origin*, by making communication ‘virtual’ and demonstrating the necessity of the ideal possibility not of a subject but the ‘subjectless transcendental field’, shows that transcendental subjectivity

as constitutive of the object is (nothing more than) an ideal possibility—it is the liberation of sense from all factual subjects that writing accomplishes in order to constitute the object, particularly in terms of the essential “*persisting existence*” which belongs to objects; “[writing] makes communications possible without immediate or mediate personal address; it is, so to speak, communication become virtual” (UG 164). Writing performs, as I have explained already in the chapter describing the coherence of possibilities, a transcendental function in separating the possibility of the act of a transcendental subject, on which the possibility of objectivity still depends, from the existence of the factual subject. This independence from the factual is opaque in spoken language alone, wherein the necessity of speech’s evanescence keeps the two (the factual and the possible) always coincident. By preserving the sign, writing separates the possibility of its apprehension from the instant of its authorship; unlike speech, writing remains ‘potent’ after the moment of inscription, and this allows the reading subject to remain anonymous, and therefore to not *be* any particular subject at all. Borrowing a brilliant phrase coined by Hyppolite to describe the epochē (“subjectless transcendental field”), Derrida describes the role of writing in Husserl’s *coherence* of ideal possibilities; “By absolutely virtualizing dialogue, writing creates a kind of autonomous transcendental field from which every actual subject can be absent” (IOG 88).

Derrida’s description is as potentially misleading as it is beautiful and profound, however, especially with regard to his use of the term ‘create’—in a sense, the autonomy and freedom from dependence on actual subjects is indeed created by writing, but only insofar as writing makes it possible to perceive an independence that already belonged to language, indeed to everything else constituting the coherence of ideality. What language does is make the distinction between the essential possibility of a subject’s act, without which the meaningfulness of the object would be lacking, and the actual subject, which Derrida says “left to itself, is totally without signification [*insignifiante*]” (IOG 88), perceivable, thinkable. The distinction remains hidden in the case of spoken language in which the necessity of the actual presence of a listening subject due to the merely contingent properties of speech as ephemeral, as a medium without durability, interferes with the power to imagine a circumstance in which the language and its expression maintained its meaningfulness in the absence of any actual subject. Writing furnishes the material for a thought experiment which would adequately demonstrate this independence.

This just means that the possibility of writing is always already there, in the possibility of language, as a sort of ‘archē-writing’.<sup>93</sup>

As essential for the possibility of objectivity, the possibility of the subject can be included among the parts of Husserl’s coherence of ideality, as a transcendental possibility. Leonard Lawlor’s description of the interdependence between subjectivity and writing supports this interpretation of it as an interdependence of possibilities;

“By being able to do without every actual or factual subject, every actual reader or writer, writing opens up the possibility of transcendental subjectivity. Therefore transcendental subjectivity depends on the possibility of writing” (DH 117). ‘The *possibility* of subjectivity depends on the *possibility* of writing—the factual is never at issue, is “totally without signification” (IOG 88).

The ambiguities of phenomenology are ambiguities of the sense of history, and the history of sense, or to be slightly less abstruse, the question of the truth of the *identity* noted at the end of the *Introduction* that brings together historicity and sense (see IOG 150–51) in an indissoluble unity. Everything concerning genesis and the search for origins that is at stake in the project of phenomenology, and in that of philosophy itself, rests on the question of whether history is up to the task. “In all the significations of this term historicity is *sense*.” (IOG 150)—history and sense map to the totality of each other’s possibilities, but is history a movement beyond its own closure, beyond the limits of sense? This ambiguity concludes both the *Introduction* and *Voice and Phenomenon*, in which it is more strictly delineated and its tensions aggravated. Is genesis the history of the presentation of being the closure of which is defined, or is it the ontological question just opened up that brings us beyond both presence and sense<sup>94</sup>? If it is both, how is that to be understood? If genesis is the history of the presentation of being, confined to sense, and the ontology that Derrida shows the opening onto, then are the two absolutely distinct and is the separation between them both according to sense determinable as fundamental to the sense of history in all its possible significations, as Derrida claims in the *Introduction* (see IOG 150). If so, then is the thinkability of ontology secure?

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<sup>93</sup> A neologism Derrida adopts to write about just the kind of necessary possibility of writing for language of any kind in *Of Grammatology* (see DG 60)

<sup>94</sup> Of course, if history leads beyond sense, then so does sense, since the former’s identification with the latter goes both ways.

The way to begin addressing these questions is shown at the conclusion of *Voice*, in the opening of ontology on the one hand and the closure of history on the other. I will finish my enquiry there, bringing in parallel movements from the *Introduction* as necessary.

Derrida identifies the ‘closure’ (or, ‘death’) of the history of being, that is of both metaphysics and phenomenology as well as the history itself which characterises every possible form of them, as “self-presence in absolute knowledge” (VP 87). The closure of the metaphysics of presence and the pursuit of absolute knowledge is their achievement; the self-presence of absolute knowledge. It is also the end of science, its closure and death, since science is nothing but the pursuit of knowledge, *love of wisdom* in the sense in which it is characterised in Diotima’s fable of Gifted (*Πόρος*) and Poverty in Plato’s *Symposium* (see Plato, *Symposium* 81f).<sup>95</sup> Science is not, for Husserl or for any other thinker, perfect wisdom—it is the *infinite task* of reason. Closure is the end of science, which science perpetually forestalls. The closure is thus associated with death—it is the end of history and the end of science. Closure is also a consequence of the same infinitude which maintains the opening. In Derrida’s metaphor which is never just a metaphor, life and death are brought together in the striving for life in meaning through voice, which Derrida says is; “*at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead.*” (VP 88)

Differance, according to Derrida, is the implied ambiguity that sustains the unequivocal structures of phenomenology. Between the infinite difference of phenomenological historicity, which as the ‘diacritical’ structure of phenomenological temporality extends the theme of history beyond the Kantian limitation of it to ‘intrawordly’ investigation; and the infinite presence of the instant, which is the irreducible origin of any evidence, there is a differance which is ‘prior to’, in the sense of not subsumable under one or the other of, both deferral and difference and both finitude and infinity. Being is neither simply the infinite self-presence of the intentional object with the constituting ego in the living present, nor simply the infinite difference which is constituted as ideal object, but always both, owing its existence to the difference between them. This differance is the region in which phenomenology is at work, and the marking of a differance ‘prior to’ or ‘beyond’ the finitude of phenomenological being as diacrisis of sense in infinite difference is what, finally, motivates the ontological move and the closure of the metaphysics of presence and the history of presence.

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<sup>95</sup> see Plato, *Symposium* 81f

This means, counter-intuitively, that the closure comes about through the limitation not of presence but its contrary, or to be more precise—the closure comes about from difference as the deferral/difference between presence and difference. The *différance* between infinite presence and infinite difference, which is indicated in the finitude of infinite difference in a way I will shortly outline, may demand the closure of infinite presence. This is because presence is neither simply the absolute other of difference, preserved in its infinitude by an absolute lack of interrelation with its ‘outside’ and contrary, nor simply difference deferred, a product and consequence of originary difference. *Différance* is the difference between difference and presence. Or to put it the other way, it is the presence of each as the deferral of the other. Presence is exposed to an *other* which is not simply external to any relation, nor capable of being subsumed under it as a derivation, and therefore its closure is indicated in the instance in which the ontological question is opened up. The closure of the search for origins in history is not the abandonment of that project altogether; it just means that for the first time the search for origin beyond sense, beyond “the system of wanting-to-say” (VP 88 “*vouloir-dire*” [Voix 116]) has become urgent. The question of the origin of meaning presents itself as if for the first time in difference, because the outside of meaning is not absolutely without relation. Nevertheless, this relationality does not make of the sensible a ‘region’, for reasons I will go into shortly.

In order to understand the other side of history brought into play by difference, of course, it is necessary to explain the way the discourse of difference is demanded ‘in the first place’ by the finitude that emerges from the concept of infinity in Husserl as infinite difference or “indefiniteness of *différance*” (VP 87) not derived from presence. At the same time, the infinite deferral of the infinite present is a limit to the present’s ideal infinity, so the infinite as an infinite fullness is also terminated. This is why, as Derrida mentions, Husserl is consistently cognisant of the limitation of the “schema of a metaphysics of presence” (VP 87) which, Derrida argues, his philosophy is nevertheless subject to. The finitude of infinite presence makes phenomenology’s fate, that it “relentlessly exhausts itself trying to make difference derivative” (VP 87), tragic; doomed to failure and disappointment. But what is the sense of this failure? Notwithstanding phenomenology’s sometimes stubborn pursuit of its tragic fate, however, is a grounding (so to speak—one that would in fact be a pseudo-grounding at best) in infinite difference similarly doomed? Is the infinite deferral of the idea (which Derrida has shown to also be the infinite difference of the idea) not just the idea which is capable of sustaining the infinite work of

phenomenological enquiry? In order to account for phenomenology in this way, the appearance of the idea of infinite difference must be accounted for; the question ‘how is infinite difference that is not derivative of fundamental presence thinkable?’ must be raised. And it is with this question that the problem of infinity gets serious. How serious?

The death sentence is imposed; “Only a relationship to my-death could make the infinite *différance* of presence appear.” (VP 87) Derrida’s explanation for why death is necessary to the appearance of infinite difference, to what would seem to have so little to do with it and perhaps, as infinite, resist it, is dizzyingly condensed. Derrida starts with Hegel’s depiction of Kant’s conception of the infinite idea as a sort of *apeiron*; a mere lack of limit, or, in Hegel’s own pejorative term—the ‘poor infinite’ (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*). The infinite as *in*-finite and *a*-peiron, which is merely the negation of the finite, undermines its own concept because it is conceived on the basis of its counterpart, in excluding the finite from the infinite, the infinite is made finite. The *definition* of infinity annihilates infinity. Supposing that Hegel’s critique would hold just as well against Husserl’s conception of infinity as it does against Kant’s, Derrida, implies that infinite difference as the *apeiron* or indefinite is another name for the ‘poor infinity’ by referring to it here in his own terms as “the indefiniteness of *différance*” (VP 87), the indefiniteness of difference which is not derived from a prior full term (or presence). It is not only Husserl’s infinite, as in the infinite idea, then, that stands upon the paradox of the *apeiron* (which has been held to be problematic since at least Pythagoras), but Derrida’s also. If Husserl does not derive “difference from the fullness of a *parousia*” (VP 87) that is in acknowledgement of the impossibility of doing so—of the infinite delay which separates fullness from the discursivity of the ideal object—it is an acknowledgement that Derrida will enthusiastically accede to. In his radical interpretation of Husserl’s disruptions of presence the distinguishing traits of his philosophy are emerging fully developed—the notion of the absolute as passage, the notion of trace and of fundamental *différance*—all of which derive from the refusal to derive “difference from the fullness of a *parousia*” (VP 87). The challenge then is not to eliminate the thought of the *in*-finite, but to explain its thinkability. Derrida states, again in a Hegelian moment, that infinite difference can be thought only by thinking the ‘positive infinite’<sup>96</sup>. For *différance* to appear, its counterpart must be thought—the positive infinite. Given the appearance of the positive infinite, infinite

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<sup>96</sup> “the positive infinite must be thought (which is possible only if it thinks *itself*) in order that the indefiniteness of *différance* may appear *as such*.” (VP 87) “l’infini positif doit être pensé (ce qui n’est possible que s’il *se* pense lui-même) pour que l’indéfini de la *différance* apparaisse *comme telle*.” (Voix 114).



difference can be thought, but only through death; only because the positive infinite must think its own death.

What Derrida calls, after Hegel, 'positive infinity' can be nothing other than the absolute, the totality of being, or else its 'positivity' would not be infinite.<sup>97</sup> The difference which distinguishes entities from one another is exactly what is meant by a difference derived from presence, because it operates within the infinite presence of the absolute. This is difference that can be thought, since it is within presence and does not demand the self-defeating logic of the 'poor infinity'. This difference will not, however, be infinite in the Kantian sense, since the absolute limits and makes it definite. Now, mathematically it is possible for the absolute to encompass subsidiary infinities, the way mathematical infinities can contain infinities, and indeed even equal infinities (the set of all natural numbers starting from two is infinite and even though the set of all natural numbers starting from one contains it, the latter is no greater or smaller than the former; they are both infinitely large). There is no reason why a difference within the absolute could not be an infinite difference, since infinity can always contain a plurality of infinities. But logical infinity shows itself to be different from mathematical infinity in this regard. Mathematical infinity is not logically infinite. To be infinite must mean to be without determination and limitation—whether because as the *apeiron* it is conceptually *defined* as such absence of limits or whether because as the absolute it is conceived as all that belongs to being. Mathematical infinity is not infinite in this way—for starters it is already defined as belonging only to the realm of mathematics. A mathematical infinity is not without limits, but a set which is not limited in at least one dimension. It can be limited on its other sides, and in terms of its character—even the set of all numbers is defined by the idea of number. The mathematical infinite is, as such, always derived from the full presence of an idea. The analogy therefore breaks down, because although a certain kind of infinity or at least openness could belong to a difference that operated within the safe confines of the absolute, it would not have the absolute and unconditioned infinitude of logical infinity—it would already be determined. Infinite difference cannot be derived “from the fullness of a *parousia*” (VP 87), because it would not then be infinite but derived from a presence which would be to it as a limit, and the infinite difference which constitutes is without a simple and definite origin in fullness. And yet, despite these difficulties, the conceptual self-contradictions of 'negative infinity' preclude the thinking of the idea and its infinitude on that basis (which would never have

been a basis). If the infinite difference of the ideal cannot be thought as the negation of limits or yet on the basis of an abiding presence, then we are one step closer to death. The stakes are at their highest here, where death in the form of the impossibility of thinking the infinite which is not positive threatens the opening (and life) of reason that the infinite promised.

The difference between (and relation between) difference and presence is difference. There is a difference from even an infinite positivity, an absolute, which appears in death. Derrida indicates quite slyly that the thinking or appearance of positive infinite must include the possibility of death. This is necessary because the infinite must be self reflexive, or as he puts it; the thinking of the positive infinite “is possible only if it thinks *itself*” (VP 87). Otherwise, the infinitely present object would be limited by a subject over against it, and would not be infinite after all. Let us recall what this means—the living present which is the infinite origin of being must be turned on itself if being is to be comprehended in its infinitude, a self-reflection which will bring into focus death, the death which limits the infinite.

Alluding to the Hegelian notion of the absolute as self-reflexive, the invocation of the relation to death as condition of possibility for the appearance of infinite difference hearkens back to Derrida’s earlier argument, in the chapter “Meaning and Representation”, that absence, which is to say specifically the possibility of *my* absence—death—, lurks in presence, is in fact constitutive of presence. In that argument, Derrida explains that the ‘I am’, far from having meaning only in the factual event of the speaker’s own existence, in fact means something only because of the possibility of death or ‘absolute disappearance’; “The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is therefore originally the relation to its own possible disappearance.” (VP 46) The reasoning is that because presence *is*, it has always been and will always be; “To think presence as the universal form of transcendental life is to open me to the knowledge that in my absence, beyond my empirical existence, prior to my birth and after my death, *the present is*.” (VP 46) To say that “I am” is to make an association of myself with being (“The *I am*, being experientially lived only as an *I am present*, presupposes in itself the relationship to presence in general, to being as presence.” [VP 46]) indicates the possibility of my death in the necessity that being will always be. The relationship with presence as a relationship with the possibility of absence, is constitutive

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<sup>97</sup> As it is, it is not simply infinite, but, as Lawlor explains (see Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl* 138), finite and infinite, due to the problematic logic of totality, which must both be finite, as it establishes the

of the I—to be able to say ‘I am’, which is to say, to have a relationship with presence in general, I must have a relationship with my possible absence. To say ‘I am’ is to be able to think that the presence which now makes this ‘I’ possible somehow must with absolute certainty go on without me, that the present *is* and that this *is* is invulnerable to the possible disappearances to which I myself am, and therefore to say ‘I am’ is to say ‘I will die’. The allusion to Heideggerean being-towards-death could scarcely be more obvious, especially when Derrida writes; “we can no longer say that the experience of the possibility of my absolute disappearance (of my death) comes to affect me, supervenes over an *I am* and modifies a subject.” (VP 46) The implicit point is that we cannot take authentic being-towards-death as a character of a subject in any way, since it is rather that something like being-towards-death is constitutive of the possibility of subjectivity.

Here Derrida would show that as the metaphysics of presence metaphysics conceals absence and absence’s constitution of presence. It treats being as though it need not be in relationship with its death, which is to say with non-being. The reduction of the sign as, according to the logic of representation, derivative of original being is the same concealment of non-being. The sign as the system of derivation of reproductions from an original presence isolates the relationship to death. This relationship to death animates the sign as relation between presence and absence, wherein reproduction in a sign produces relationship with absent being, as a system which all in all comes along afterwards, after simple presence. Although Husserl’s eidetic science is fundamentally the possibility of repetition, as well as the other ideal possibilities, it requires, according to Derrida, such a dissimulation of the sign and the relationship with death—it requires the infinite presence of the living present; “alone a temporality, determined on the basis of the living present as its source, determined on the basis of the now as ‘source-point,’ can secure the purity of ideality, that is, the openness of the repetition of the same to infinity” (VP 46)—without the originality of a present there is no such thing as repetition. If being is determined as presence, Derrida is arguing, then that determination must be rethought in a radical way so as to cease its dissimulation of the absence which makes it possible, and at the same time impossible. The difference between being and non-being must be thought together with being’s deferral of non-being, which is to say the relationship between them that is not difference, but dependence and concealment. This is indicated in ‘differance’, with the considerable wrinkle that being beyond being it is also beyond meaning. While I would counter that the necessity goes both ways—the same is only thus on the basis of the

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limit of being, and at the same time infinite, as it is open to all being.

possibility of its repetition to infinity—Hegel’s refutation of the *apeiron* demonstrates a logical priority.

To think the ‘I’ on the one hand, or to think the positive infinite on the other, is in any case to think death. This is why Derrida announces that “Only a relationship to my-death could make the infinite *différance* of presence appear.” (VP 87). The logic of this has been laid out through the discussion in “Meaning and Representation” and it comes together in the presentation of Hegel’s argument for infinity as the absolute which is self-reflexive. Since the appearance of the infinite must involve the appearance to self of the subject of experience, and since death as the possibility of absolute disappearance of the subject is constitutive of the subject, it follows that death, which is to say finitude and the possibility of absence is constitutive of positive infinity. In its constituting relation to death, the infinite is dependent on the finitude that death presents. In its constituting relation to death, the positive is dependent on the absence that death presents. These conditions of possibility, which are also conditions of impossibility, which is to say conditions which make the phenomenon and concept impossible at its origin, are perfect examples of the form of critique, or rather of what is “at once more and less serious” (*Rogues* 124) than critique, that will remain with deconstruction; the quasi-transcendental condition of impossibility. They represent the *différance* which precedes the difference between finite and infinite, presence and absence, etcetera; “*The infinite différence is finite*. We are no longer able to think it within the opposition of the finite and the infinite, absence and presence, negation and affirmation.” (VP 87)

The infinite difference and infinite delay which constitutes the origin of meaning, which phenomenology is up to the task of tracing, betrays its own thought—the impossibility of thinking the infinite as the *apeiron*. On the other hand, infinite presence requires the thought of its *other* in the necessity of thinking its own *death* or *absence*. The origin sought, therefore, can only be thought on the basis of *différance*—of what does not divide itself in the distinction between the finite and the infinite, between absence and presence, or between difference as *delay* and difference as *difference*. The paradoxes of infinity and finitude finally demand that phenomenology probe beyond meaning into the question of origin which is not a ‘what’, but a ‘why’.

## 7 – Iterability and the meaning of origin

(“Signature, Event, Context”)

In “Signature, Event, Context” the necessity of iterability for signs and the sign is articulated in such a way that it is brought into tension with the necessity of unity of self-identity which is also constitutive of the sign. This poses a challenge to Husserl’s historical grounding of science in originary meaning that the short essay only begins to touch upon. Meaning depends on iterability, on the possibility of being infinitely repeated with its full meaning. However, if meaning is always iterable then the unique instance of it is incapable of containing it. Derrida writes: “the very iterability which constitutes their identity never permits them to be a unity of self-identity” (MP 318) Meaning never exists in an instant, because its meaningfulness is dependent upon the possibility of infinite repetitions of it in infinite other instants. Because an instant cannot contain what is necessary in order for meaning to exist, Derrida’s challenging thought runs, there cannot have been an origin of the meaning of geometry. There cannot have been an instant in which the meaning of geometry was brought into being. There is no ‘essence of the first time’, since the essence of the first time already depends on the essence of the subsequent iterations. Also, as we have seen before, the aporia cannot be quickly resolved by drawing a distinction at the iterability’s ‘mere’ possibility. Although it may appear that a conflation of possibility and essential fact is the source of confusion, and that the deconstruction merely aggravates this confusion, it is impossible to rigorously distinguish between the possibility of iteration and the fact of the first time, because, as I showed with respect to the coherence of ideality, all of the essential ideal structures of meaning are *possibilities*. Though a fact, the origin of a sense is a possibility contingent on the possible existence of iterations thereof. Because the whole structure is eidetic, there is nothing which is actual in the sense that it has a priority over all possibility.

### *a. Grounded in the Event*

If an origin, that quintessential *event*, that event par-excellence, is not singular but essentially caught up in determining relationships to later iterations of it, of what it is as self-identical

unit of meaning, then that ‘essence of the first time’ which in the *Origin* was the basis of ideal history is not a simple ‘time’ that had been ‘first’. The necessity that the ideal objectivity must have had an origin in time which grounded the certainty of historical necessity is destroyed when the just as necessary involvement of identical iterations of the origin is demonstrated. How can there have been a single ‘first time’ if the first time is meaningless and unthinkable without the constituting possibility of its absolute identity with the second time; indeed, with infinite other ‘times’; times which are necessarily not times of an iteration of something *other* and therefore are not other than first. Is it necessary to rethink the entire structure of ideal history in the face of this—to think a history which is not dependent upon the uniqueness of the event of the origin? Is such a history even possible or meaningful? Where would such a rethought history leave the reactivatory project with originary truth-meaning? Is originary meaning coherent if the origin is proliferated?

What is essential first of all in history is the ‘essence-of the-first-time’, the *Erstmaligkeit* that, as I explained earlier, Derrida borrowed from Fink and sought to marry to Husserl’s phenomenology of history. In a footnote on page 48, Derrida insists that Fink’s concept “gives a thematic value to a signification aimed at by a profound intention of Husserl.” (IOG 48fn) This ‘first time’ is what distinguishes history from an ahistorical, atemporal articulation of essential characters and qualities in which priority would denote purely and simply a kind of necessity. Within such a purely atemporal articulation of ideal necessities, the absolutely apodeictic historical necessity of the event, the ‘that it happened’ of the origin, is not brought out. The essence-of-the-first-time indicates the foundation of historical certainty—that what is must have come to be. All the same, this may seem like a nice philosophical distinction and a trivial contribution to philosophy of history if one were to forget what is made possible by the determination of historical necessity, of a necessity that is not simply logical in the sense of the logical interrelationships of concepts—the step beyond what is already logically contained in the science itself. This is the step that makes the enquiry into the subjective origin of geometry—extrawordly history—possible. While the ideal meaning of the objective science of geometry is entirely internal to the logical meanings and interconnections of its terms, the originating meaning of geometry’s very own necessity is outside the logical structure of the science. Because geometry’s meaning, its original meaningfulness, can only be in experience, that total region from which it wants to declare its independence, any certainty with respect to it is in the necessity of the event of its origin. To put it plainly—it is because geometry must have

come into being that its meaning can be associated with certainty with experience, the subject and its lifeworld. The meaning cannot be ascertained in pure atemporal logical necessity of its own objective sphere itself. But geometry must have been invented, and thus it must have had meaning for a subject which is to say have had relevance to their lifeworld. And from that certainty essentially general characteristics of the lifeworld, such as its being a world of things with bodily character, can be described. But the necessity of an origin is the cornerstone of this enquiry, this historical enquiry or *Rückfrage*. No ideal deduction is possible without it.

The thrust of Derrida's deconstruction of the event in "Signature, Event, Context" is the severing of the sign's meaningfulness, and of meaningfulness in general, from its domination by its origin. By pointing out that the meaning of the sign, its unity, is constituted by the iterability that transcends that very same self-identity, Derrida complicates the localisation of the unity of meaning in self-identity. Consequently, the self-identical core as the basic element and origin of meaning is destroyed. Meaning is not derived from a simple origin or 'transcendental signified' which would anchor the signifier thereof in its indirect but sovereign presence. Derrida writes: "This structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of every mark, even if oral, a grapheme in general, that is, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged 'production' or origin." (MP 318) The constituting possibility of exact reproduction opens the same self-identity that had guaranteed the presence, or self-presence as presence to itself, of meaning to alterity and difference. There is thus no longer an origin... at least not a simple one.

Here, in a different context and having become more sophisticated in philosophy of language and structuralism, Derrida takes on the same target he took on four years earlier in *Voice and Phenomenon*—a self-identity of meaning capable of deriving all of language and significations' sorties and excursions. It is the same target as *Voice's* pre-expressive core of sense. Instead of a core, instead of a unity that would be prior to the relation to an outside that constitutes expressivity and iterability, meaning can only be constituted by difference and by deferral of that idea of self-presence. In this deconstruction of the origin three key Derridean ideas: the deconstruction of presence, arche-writing, and difference are all articulated as what the enquiry into meaning brings up.

It is clear from Derrida's deconstructions that the idea of a united and fully self-identical and present origin of meaning is in no case tenable. Of course, the chief target in this context is J.L. Austin and the distinction that Derrida finds completely untenable; the possibility of a rigorous distinction between the appropriate context of an utterance and its being 'taken out of context', as for instance by being cited. Derrida points out that Austin's effort to keep citation and other 'non-serious' uses of language separate and distinct—"abnormal, parasitical" (MP 324)—ignores the necessity of the possibility of citation—it is impossible to imagine an utterance that is entirely sincere and original and to which the possibility of iteration in "infinitely new contexts in an absolutely non-saturable fashion" (MP 320) did not already belong. Derrida writes 'non-saturable' because it is impossible for the original intention of the utterance to saturate the infinite possible contexts in which it could find meaning, and thus for the possible meaning of the utterance to be saturated and limited by the intention. Saturation would require the presence of a conscious intention without which the sign could not function: "For a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense demanded by Austin, it at least would be necessary for the conscious intention to be totally present and actually transparent for itself and others, since it is a determining focal point of the context." (MP 327) But if this were the case, if meaning was so limited by originating intention, it would be because it was without the iterability and self-identity that makes 'taking out of context' possible. Meaning would not exist if it were without this self-identity. He asks: "What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way?" (MP 321) Thus, "one will no longer be able to exclude, as Austin wishes, the 'non-serious,' the *oratio obliqua*, from 'ordinary' language." (MP 327)<sup>98</sup>

It is also clear that Derrida wants his deconstruction to take hold not only in the peculiar aggravation of the significance of context that Austin's theory of performative utterances employs—the deconstruction of the presence of originating intention is meant to solicit a whole epoch of metaphysical thinking. And Husserl epitomises this epoch. The reasons that Husserl exemplifies the metaphysics of presence have been well explored—it is Husserl's careful attention to what in his 1964/65 seminar Husserl called the

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<sup>98</sup> In his "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida" John Searle insists on the distinction between standard and parasitical forms of speech acts, as Derrida quotes him "there could not, for example, be promises made by actors in a play if there were not the possibility of promises made in real life." (LI 89) In *Limited Inc*, Derrida himself reasserts what is explained in "Signature..."; that what is being distinguished from the standard here is the possibility of reproduction and repetition, and that this exclusion is by no means possible without the denial of the structure of language that is so-called standard (see LI 89).



‘irrecusability of the present’ as the only possible form or position for experience as such that both brings to attention the constant and invariably assumed structure of presence as the condition for experience, and thus also in bringing it to light primes it for and exposes it to scrutiny that would look into what it itself presupposes.

Derrida is indeed entirely explicit that the same ethical and teleological determination that makes the distinction between language which is ‘serious’ on the one hand and ‘abnormal’ and ‘parasitic’ language on the other possible is deeply engrained not only in Husserl’s theory of language, but in the entire edifice of transcendentalism. The possibility of citation and other ‘abnormal’ or ‘parasitic’ forms of language demonstrate the possibility of the absence of a signified that Husserl ethically determines as the crisis, which is to say the crisis of the forgetting of meaning. The crisis of sciences is nothing besides this—the absence of their signifieds, which is to say the forgetting of the meaning of their truth which opens up the possibility that it does not exist or is not recuperable. Derrida points out that the possibility of determining this absence as a crisis is dependent upon the same teleologico-ethical limitation of ‘normal’ language to “‘logical’ language” or “language of knowledge” (MP 319) meaning language which is not *Sinnlosigkeit* but which possesses meaning. What this would mean is that the language’s signified is not absent, but present.

However, as Derrida has shown in “Signature...”, absence, or to be more precise, the constituting possibility of absence, is essential to meaning as such. If that is the case, the counter-example to crisis is lacking, is in fact a non-sense, and what Husserl calls crisis is actually the normal state-of-affairs for meaning. Meaning is what is made possible by the possible absence of the signified. The, as Derrida writes, “possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its ‘original’ meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context” (MP 320) is what ‘constitutes’ the mark—the self-identical unit of meaning which is the basis not only of the system of written marks, but oral communication, and even meaningful experience itself. As I have fairly exhaustively demonstrated in my second chapter, on the eidetic and objective structure of intentional consciousness, the possibility for being meaningful of experience depends on its constitution as an objective, self-identical unity. Therefore iterability belongs to it *de jure*. As Derrida points out, this possibility deconstructs meaning by opening it up to the possibility of the absence of its own object. The whole possibility of reactivation of originary meaning and the resolution to the crisis must then be cast into doubt—as long as the possibility of absence of the signified belongs to the structure of meaning it is impossible

to guarantee with the certainty necessary for the resolution of crisis that the meaning that could ground the truth of geometry (for example) were ‘present’. Because meaning is always constituted by the possibility of absence, it is impossible to derive rigour from the certainty invested in the apodeictically certain determination of an originary meaning. The apparent certainty of the essential origin dissimulates the necessity of the possibility of its absence, without which it could never be the origin of anything.<sup>99</sup> Every present meaning, as meaning, is essentially absent from its origin.

This kind of logic is what riled John Searle in his enagement with Derrida. In his reply to Derrida’s reply to his reply to “Signature”, “Literary Theory and Its Discontents”, Searle takes issue with Derrida’s excessive concern for exactitude and conceptual rigour;

it is not necessarily an objection to a conceptual analysis, or to a distinction, that there are no rigorous or precise boundaries to the concept analysed or the distinction being drawn. It is not necessarily an objection even to theoretical concepts that they admit of application *more or less*.

(Searle, “Literary Theory and Its Discontents” p. 637)

Searle accuses Derrida of ignorance of the history of the philosophy of language and of commitment to a certain pre-Wittgensteinian conception of language” (Searle, “Discontents” p. 639). It’s tempting to sympathise with Searle’s apparent annoyance with the lawyerly-seeming rigidity at the base of many of Derrida’s quasi-transcendental investigations—if it is possible to preserve important concepts such as meaning by merely being a little more relaxed about their meaning isn’t this the only reasonable approach? Should we not be willing to sacrifice exactitude to preserving our understanding of the usual and normal for which such exactitude is, to all appearances, superfluous? Leaving aside that Searle seems determined throughout the debate to misinterpret Derrida’s deconstructions as mere sceptical rejection of meaning (see Searle, “Discontents” p. 642), is not a more conservative approach possible, even necessary?

### ***b. Etho-Teleology of Crisis***

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<sup>99</sup> Seemingly exasperated, Derrida explains the difference between a necessary possibility and a necessity in his response to Searle: “*Sec* never said that this absence is *necessary*, but only that it is possible (Sarl agrees) and that this possibility must therefore be taken into account: it [the possibility of an absent receiver] pertains, qua possibility, to the structure of the mark as such, i.e.,

If the logic of originary meaning places it inescapably in this bind, it is not obvious what the juridical possibility of the absence of the signified ‘looks like’. Does it merely mean that the crisis of grounding is inescapable? That there is no possibility of grounding the ideal objectivity of geometry and the like in experience? This cannot be the case, since as I have already shown there is a possibility of determining the experiential counterparts of ideal science. It seems to be true that the determination that geometry had to have originated in a world of things and that the things, some of them, had a bodily character. Moreover, it is true that this essential bodiliness does not belong to the predicates of geometry itself. Something has been added, then—a meaning has been attached to the science, or else made explicit in it, that was missing before. What is at question is the originary of it and the necessity that attaches to it on that account. The originary grounding is the attachment to a given meaning of a certain necessity—this is the epistemic significance of the historical enquiry. It is not merely *possible* for geometry to be a way to exactly and univocally describe the sensible world. This is not one possible meaning among others, because although there may be other meanings for geometry, or especially for specific geometrical objects and theorems (a square may come to mean the principle of limit and boundedness as opposed to the *apeiron* or infinite in the sense of inexactitude itself represented by the oblong shape, as it did for the Pythagoreans; and the number three may come to be attached to great theological significance in Christian mysticism), the meaningful relation to a sensible lifeworld was necessary in order for geometry to have been invented.

Husserl of course never states explicitly why we should view the one as a viable candidate for originary meaning, and not the others, but it isn’t hard to expand on the necessity he does state. The originating meaning of universal truths such as those of geometry could not be found in an arbitrary mystical system of thought; in order to originate truth with the universality and necessity of geometry, it must have been invested with meaning that was equally universal. Such universality is only to be found in the most essential and general characters of the real phenomenally given world. This is not to discount the possibility that other extrinsic causes contributed to the purely chance fact of geometry’s invention—indeed, I have paid some attention to the importance of the tax laws of the Egyptian floodplain in occasioning protogeometrical innovations, and these laws and the annual flooding, and the Egyptian religion and burial traditions that encouraged accumulation of great wealth and thus necessitated a rigorous taxation system,

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to the structure precisely of its iterability. And hence must not be excluded from the analysis of this structure... this *possibility* is *always* inscribed, hence *necessarily* inscribed as *possibility*” (LI 48)

is certainly nothing but contingent and extrinsic to the essential history of geometry itself—but in order for geometry to have been invented as an eternal and universal truth that was also universally meaningful it must have been invested with a core of meaning that was universal as well.

However, this originarity and the certainty at work in it is exactly what is called into question in the possibility of the absence of the signified. The possibility of absence of the signified and of the resulting non-saturation of meaning means that the historical enquiry (*Rückfrage*) that discloses the necessity of an event of the origin, and the meaningfulness that that in turn necessitates, can never saturate the possible meaningfulness of the science of geometry. The priority of the originary truth meaning would no longer be absolute. Not even in the case of a rigorous reactivating *Rückfrage* that had been exhaustive in the determination of the essential, invariable, and universal meaning of its truth could it saturate the possible originary meanings of what as meaning and signification is necessarily, essentially separable and independent structure of signification.

The consequences of this necessity are neither mysterious nor subtle—it is the impossibility of tying the ideal science of geometry to a rigorously determined origin with absolute certainty. The possibility of the absence of the originating intention cannot be conclusively overcome. A number of concrete possibility result from this—there is the possibility that the meanings which because they are not sufficiently general and essential seem to be able to be dismissed as contingent and belonging to extrinsic history, such as the Nile flood-plain land-surveying or the mathemysticism of the Pythagoreans or a similar but earlier sect, cannot be excluded, cannot with absolute certainty be said not to have determined the existence and meaning of geometry, and even to have been the *only* way that geometry could have come to be. The history of geometry would despite Husserl's intentions still belong to an irreducible contingency, because there would be no possibility of absolutely and finally excluding all merely contingent meaning from geometry, even from geometry not only as a historical and cultural artefact, but from its meaning as universally true. Without the possibility of an originary intent saturating the meaning of geometry, there is no possibility of absolutely excluding the significance of the contingent meanings that we could otherwise say have merely attached themselves to geometry from having had a role in its apparent universal meaningfulness and truth. If the success of geometry owes has been due to the contingently-associated meanings such as Egyptian land-surveying, Pythagorean mysticism, and even the idealised materialism of Galilean science, it is not possible to exclude this as the source of its meaning because of a carefully

determined originary intention. The upshot would be that the meaningfulness of geometry is not as universal as it appears to be, not only in a circumstance of crisis but even were a reactivating imagination to appear to be successful. There would be no possibility of ruling out with absolute certainty the possibility of the relativism Husserl sought to avoid at all cost. A reactivated originary intention would never be more than a certain possibility of meaning—"In this typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances." (MP 326) This would be an utter tragedy for mathematics, according to Husserl.<sup>100</sup>

While the deconstruction is written into the logic of eidetic phenomenology, its consequence is a revisiting of Nietzsche's scepticism of the origin—his adaptation of Hume's rule that nothing of the character of a cause can be determined from its effect to the project of genealogy—and the possibilities that this scepticism opens up, of finding the origins of values not in the same value, but in values altogether different, or in disvalue. As Foucault puts it, "What is found at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things." (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 79)

This danger is precisely what Searle's second defence of the invulnerability of meaning to interpretation and attention to Derrida in "Literary Theory and its Discontents" ignores. For Searle's speech act theory the distinctions between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning, type and token, etc. insulate the source of truth of meanings—sentence meaning—from molestation by the speaker and from being perverted by intent which runs counter to the sentence's own meaning. Searle writes: If communication is successful, I will have succeeded in performing a serious, literal, nondefective speech act. What follows from the fact that I or somebody else might take a *different token* of the same sentence *type* and do completely different with it? To repeat,

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<sup>100</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, in his article "The Despised Doxa" imagines a more fruitful radicalisation of imagination that remains in line with the intentions of phenomenological investigation. By increasing the scope of imaginary variation from appearances to the conditions under which things appear, variation would be extended to the structures of appearance. This would allow the distinctions between the everyday and the extraordinary to be problematised, with a rethinking of the extraordinary: "The latter is not to be thought as the exception, but rather as the permanent back-side of the ordinary and regulated, whose threads invisibly penetrate the visible fabric." (Waldenfels, "The Despised Doxa" 36)

It is not to be doubted that imaginary variations must continually broaden and disrupt its own parameters in order to prevent itself from settling into a hide-bound and conservative echo-chamber, it is unclear to me whether the radicalisation of variation from appearances to their structures is capable of this or whether it is even any different from what is already involved in a

nothing whatever follows. The intentionality of the speech act covers exactly and only that particular speech act.” (Searle, “Discontents”, p. 660) Searle’s view does not imply the laughably improbable position that sentence meanings are invulnerable to tampering, change, and distortion; on the contrary, his view of these is that meanings depend on a background, its context, that can change (see Searle, “Discontents”, p. 640-41). There is however, a bizarre consequence of Searle’s view—it does not offer any way to understand the possibility for speakers’ meaning to effect sentence meaning.

Now, without a doubt Husserl is opposed to relativism. There is no more consistent motivation running through his work than the determination of the absolute certainty and universality of mathematics and the resistance to any relativisation thereof. In *Logical Investigations* he refutes psychologism on the basis of its reliance upon facts, specifically facts about the human psychological makeup, to derive logical principles; “any theory is logically absurd which deduces logical principles from any matters of fact” (LU 82), the reason being that matters of fact, even those which are so general that the entire human species is characterised by them, “are ‘contingent’: they might very well not have been the case, they might have been different” (LU 82). The determination not to confute fact and logic continues to motivate Husserl in his critique of science. The quest to renew science by grounding it in essential and universal meaning is motivated by an intolerance for contingency in the foundations of science—it is the quest for the grounding of science in absolute, general conditions of experience as such. However, in the defence against the confusions of relativism it is just as crucial not to misunderstand its scope, and to weaken and corrupt the meaning of the priority of logical principles by expecting them to appear where they cannot.

It is crucial to understand the certainty of the origin, and what is at stake in the certainty of origin. As an origin, it is of course necessary in the sense that the invention of geometry had to have originated with this meaning, but there is nothing to ensure that it had originated to begin with, and therefore that the meaning that is universal *for it* is universal *tout court*. Even this level of certitude is not supported by the possibility of the absence of the signified, however. There can be no absolute certainty as to the existence of the necessary, the universal and essential, and logical principle. That the logical principle cannot be derived from any matters of fact does not and cannot guarantee the existence of any logical principle ‘there’ to begin with. The possibility of the absence of the signified

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rigorous eidetic investigation. It is unclear, above all, whether such a radicalisation can stave off the need for a deconstructive approach.

indicates the possibility that there is no logical principle grounding meaning and giving it the necessity of universal meaningfulness, but this only reinforces what the structure of crisis already demonstrated—that the forgetting of originary meaning contains the possibility that no adequately grounding meaning is there to be found. It is impossible to tell the difference between a science in crisis and that which is not and never was a science at all, at least for as long as the forgetting of meaning persists. It is always possible in the event that meaning is not available to ground the science that there was no meaning of the kind needed there to begin with; that geometry and the sciences were ungrounded to begin with. This danger is precisely what made crisis serious. What is newly thrown into doubt in Derrida's deconstruction of the event of the origin is only the possibility of the absolutely certain confirmation of the grounding of meaning in the universal structure of experience. It means that essentially the crisis can never be resolved or escaped.

Is the diagnosis of crisis a purely negative exercise, then? Is there nothing that can be gained from the reactivating intuition? Is the search for originary meaning at best a vanity and at worst a delusion that could only serve to reinforce our own presuppositions and give us false licence to propagate them? Not quite—while it is impossible to achieve absolute certainty that the meaning of science is grounded, it is possible to determine with certainty what could provide such a grounding and thus what such a grounding must be if indeed there is one. It can be made clear that if there is a grounding of ideal geometry in an essential and general structure of experience it could not be something like the measurement of farmland on the flood-plains of the Nile for the purposes of taxation, nor the ethical and mystical determination of the meanings of numbers and shapes—it could only be something like the exact description of things in their bodily character. Only meanings of a certain kind can be the origin of logical principles—these are logical principles themselves and not matters of fact—this is the sole defence against the logical confusion and nonsense of relativism that is left standing after Derrida's deconstruction of the transcendental origin and signified, but perhaps it is enough merely to keep categories and realms of meaning clear.

If Husserl's aim in opposing relativism is understood in the more modest sense of defending the meaning of logic from the absurdity of attempting to derive it from facts, then there is nothing in the exercise of an eidetic history which must be rejected. However, the destruction of the sense of origin, while it confirms the origin in its radical sense does have this consequence—it makes the claim to unconditioned universality of meaning-

ground contingent on the existence of the truth it grounds, and prescribes the claim to absolute truth.



## Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to show what is necessary for a philosophical and self-critical history and to answer the question how it is possible for the historical to have a place in the pursuit of truth, and to present some problems that arise from that answer. Finally, it has explored the question of the meaning of the problems—what the state of knowledge is in light of the problems it faces. If it is possible for truth to be explained in strictly phenomenological terms, or in other words—if it is possible for us to account for the existence of truth, it will be because it is possible to account for how truth comes to be. It is Derrida's analysis that shows that a phenomenological account of the existence of truth and meaning demands a historical account of how truth comes to be. In Husserl's *Crisis* writings themselves, this part of the motivation for the explanation of the constitution of ideal objectivity is always only implicit.

This thesis has explained the interdependence of history and knowledge in Husserl's development of a philosophically critical history. It has sought to explain why history is necessary, why it must start with the examination of the backward-looking attitude that makes it historical, and why—contrary to the usual opposition of truth and history—objective, universal truth can be made sense of only through the explanation of how it had come to be. While Derrida's deconstruction of the prioritisation of the present in Husserl and throughout philosophy—a priority the zenith of which is philosophical history—must confirm this unity of history and truth even as it indicates its inability to come to task with the past itself; his intervention certainly challenges the necessity of an opposition to ungroundedness of a Husserlean or any other type. The investment in groundedness of meaning and the involvement of discourse in the teleology of truth maintain a certain hold on any talk that would make a claim to truth and groundedness, but talk of that kind begins to look less motivated in an absolute sense, and to look more like a decision, or a leap of faith. This appearance is deceptive, however—in deconstruction the infinite task remains.

The importance of this question—whether a combined epistemic and historical project is possible—is the double-bind between the necessity Derrida indicates of having enough humility in one's philosophy to recognise the limits of certainty and rigour on the one hand, and the Husserlean necessity of accounting for truth. The latter comes back to a

kind of humility too, I believe. What demands truth is not the will to absolute knowledge or omniscience, but the demand to avoid dogmatism—the kind of dogmatism that any shortcomings or lapses in our pursuit of truth, whether of a skeptical or assertive mood, invites. It is just as much a treason to precipitately give up on the quest as it is to announce it is over. In a way, the ideas of destruction or deconstruction are meant to acknowledge this double-bind.

To give up on the science of history or of having the possibility of doing history taken away would be to give up on communication and the entire coherence of ideal possibilities which together make up the possibility of culture and humanity itself. We would be left with complete lack of relation and a “dogmatism in pre-Kantian style” (VM 130). Not only would the abandonment of congress be an unfathomable loss on its own terms, the notion of an isolated position could not stand up to any investigation without showing itself to be contaminated, according to Derrida’s logic. Moreover, the exclusion of relation is also the rejection of the idea of evidence in any form.

One of the things phenomenology allows us to do is to recognise that the questions at the limit or the outside of the possibility of knowledge are neither the biggest nor the most interesting nor the most urgent. Most of the questions with which philosophy should concern itself are within certain limits, certain assumptions. Deconstruction allows us to do away with the falsity of an arbitrary and unsound distinction which closes off these enquiries from the outsides which their presuppositions cut them off from, but without ending the discussion and destroying the question at hand. It allows us to recognise the limits, without forcing us to throw up our hands in despair and walk away. I have tried in this thesis to strive for an account of historical meaning which takes these concerns to heart and builds itself an edifice with many doors leading in and out.

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